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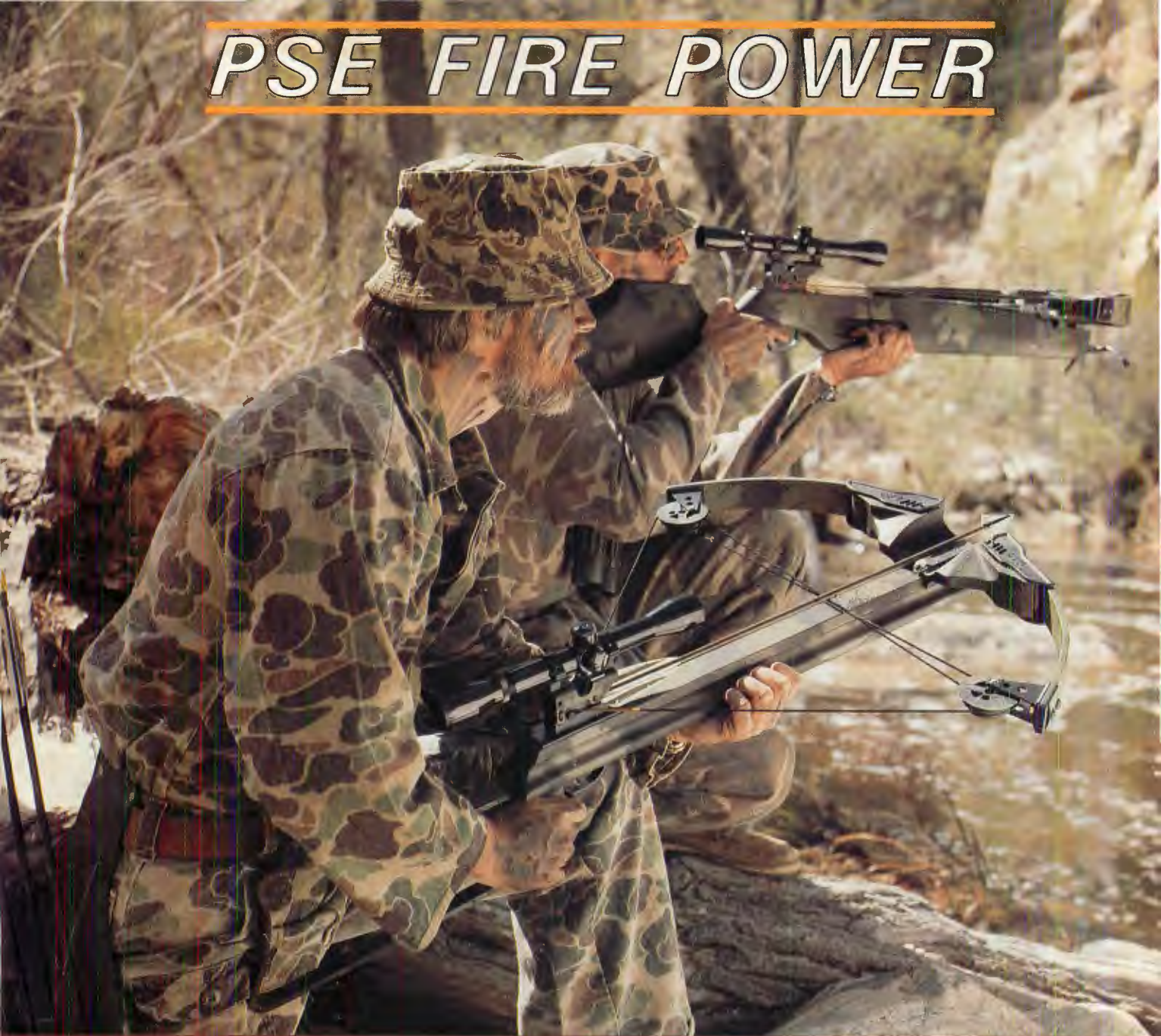
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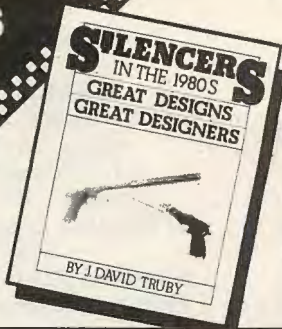
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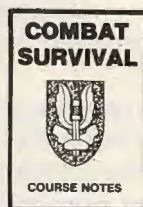
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EDITOR'S NOTE

SINCE new developments in the James "Bo" Gritz/POW issue have occurred between the time we sent the POW/MIA Special to press and today, we thought we should bring *Soldier of Fortune* readers up to date.

After the 22 March Congressional hearing on the POW/MIA issue and specifically on Gritz's activities, the public has learned that the ISA or Army Intelligence Support Activity (referred to by Gritz and his supporters as "The Activity") may have lent some unsanctioned — by DIA, CIA or National Security Council — support to Gritz but, if one believes what the U.S. government says, is now back under tight control.

In an attempt to regain credibility destroyed by his disastrous appearance before Congress and the subsequent revelation by the *Washington Times* and ABC's *Nightline* that he had lied about his participation in a Vietnam battle, Gritz appeared on F. Lee Bailey's *Lie Detector* program. After the show was taped, Gritz tried unsuccessfully to prevent its airing. Two of his three responses were inconclusive, but when he answered "Yes" to this question — "In 1981, were you asked by 'Cranston' to be a principal agent of a U.S. government mission to document evidence of POWs in communist Asia?" — the polygraph results showed deception. Cranston is the code-name for an intelligence agent who was attached to "The Agency."

On 12 May, Richard T. Childress, the National Security Council adviser to President Reagan who deals with the POW/MIA issue, spoke to a group from the Vietnam Veterans of America in Richmond, Va., about the government's progress on the POW/MIA issue, specifically about a new development with the Lao government. However, he warned: "Progress with the Lao is encouraging to all of us, but the much-publicized and incredibly irresponsible actions of Lt. Col. Gritz set us back months. Our discussions indicate that he is directly responsible for stopping — and we pray only temporarily — joint crash-site searches in Laos. Relying on hearsay information, no credible operational capability and money collected from a variety of well-intentioned individuals to include family members, he managed to do the greatest damage to the government's efforts yet encountered during this administration.

"Despite his claims, he had no official backing and will never receive any. He says no one asked him to stop — tonight, I'm officially asking him to stop. If he is interested in the welfare of our missing men and their families, he will. If he craves a ticker-tape parade or the recapture of past dreams, then he won't."

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Small Arms

Ken Hackathorn

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SOF

SEPTEMBER/1983 VOL. 8, NO. 9

COVER: Nicaraguan Contras have made frequent raids from their Honduran-based training camps against Sandinista forces in northern Nicaragua. Here soldiers carry Chinese-type 56 assault rifles. See "Contras Hope to Turn Communist Tide," p. 48. Photo: James Nachtwey/Black Star



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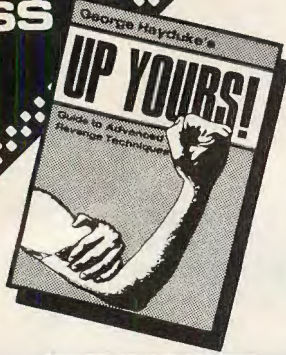
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The following comments were excerpted from the many letters received in response to our POW/MIA Special. SOF thanks all who have given us feedback and support for our effort. Readers who have not yet read this special may obtain a copy by sending \$3.50 to SOF, Dept. Gritz, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.

I salute you and your excellent staff for the Spring 1983 POW/MIA special issue, covering in detail the Bo Gritz story. I do not know of any other publication that made such an effort to set the record straight, especially without financial advertising support.

The recent operations of Gritz could not have been more poorly timed. Last September, I was one of a four-member delegation to Vietnam and Laos, sponsored by the National League of Families and contributions from family members. After many years of lockjaw, a stalemate was broken and some progress was evident. That has all been seriously damaged, and we are now trying to get things back on track.

The Laotian government cannot understand why, if the Gritz foray was not supported by our government, he wasn't prosecuted upon arrival in the United States. They don't understand our system of justice — and they certainly are not alone in that.

I would like to warn everyone against the opportunists who raise money for so-called "clandestine" operations, with enormous pre-publicity.

No one wants more than I to get our men out of Southeast Asia at the earliest possible time, alive or dead. But if anyone thinks that type operation will succeed, I advise them to look into other historic scams such as the Clifford Irving interviews of Howard Hughes, or the more recent Hitler diaries.

Again, thank you, Bob Brown, for an exceptional piece of investigative reporting and for your long dedication to the return of our men whom you personally served with in Southeast Asia. That dedication must also be *told* someday!

George L. Brooks
Chairman of the Board
National League of Families

I wish to point out that Bo Gritz would not have been permitted to wear his uniform had the trial taken place in a United States court, either. Retired military personnel cannot suit up willy-nilly when the whim strikes them.

The absence of advertising in the special issue suggests a sincere rather than commercial interest in the subject matter. I suggest that you discuss with J.P. Hagerstrom, Col., USAF (Ret.), what happens to those that effectively meddle in the foreign relations of the United States with-

FLAK



out State Department approval and the POW/MIA issue is exactly that.

Richard Henderson
San Diego, California

I hope your readers appreciate the enormous task that was involved in researching your POW/MIA special issue. It is certainly a fine job of investigative reporting.

I know that I can speak for the entire national staff and board of directors of Project Freedom in commending you for the effort and congratulating you for finally bringing to the light of day the truth about the escapades of those who have brought considerable harm to the cause of obtaining a full accounting of all our missing and long-forgotten POWs and MIAs.

We thank you.

Michael J. Blair
Director of Public Affairs
Project Freedom,
For All American POWs/MIAs

I'd like to know if SOF ever spoke to anyone who believed Col. Gritz was anything less than a looney: It certainly doesn't appear that way. I can't believe that all these ranking officers quoted believe that he is only a detriment to the cause of these missing Americans, a thorn in the side of their families, and so on. I personally know a number of POW/MIA families, some National League of Families members and some not, who both respect and admire the efforts of Col. Gritz and the others who participated in the efforts to extricate either prisoners or information.

Walt Farmer
San Antonio, Texas

No. That is no one with verifiable credentials in Special Operations or anyone with extensive knowledge of the POW/MIA issue spoke positively about "Operation Lazarus." We talked with hundreds of people; some we contacted, some contacted us. We are aware that Gritz had supporters but his supporters and fellow team members didn't return calls. We also talked with Gritz but he

declined to answer specific questions. — The Eds.

I have just read, non-stop, your special on MIA/POWs. It was very well put together. But do you really expect the DIA or USG to say, "Sure we asked Gritz to run around Laos looking for people we said do not exist"?

Roy Rodriguez
Lake Helen, Florida

While we are well aware of the "deniability" process, in this particular case we don't think it was at work. The government has launched previous attempts to check out possible POW sites in Laos. The sanctioned operations that have been undertaken bear no resemblance whatsoever to "Operation Lazarus," which the government correctly referred to as "guerrilla theater." It is possible that a low-level government agent provided some "black" assistance, something we suspect he now regrets. — The Eds.

I am a proud former Marine and I am an American first, last and always. I want to support any effort made to get my brothers back. What Gritz did is succumb to his own bullshit belief and his own "hero" status. I know many unrecognized heroes that would make Gritz look like a Boy Scout. Anyone who went into the bush is a hero in my opinion.

I am glad that you have exposed Gritz and I hope that people will not support him again. The job may take the type of action he has attempted, but let's leave it to competent men.

Larry Muncy
Houston, Texas

Col. Gritz's methods and preparations may have been questionable, but it is unfair to label him a huckster. Gritz's operations have succeeded in keeping the POW/MIA issue alive and he has accomplished more than the government for this cause. These efforts make Gritz a hero in my book.

William Nueske
Honolulu, Hawaii

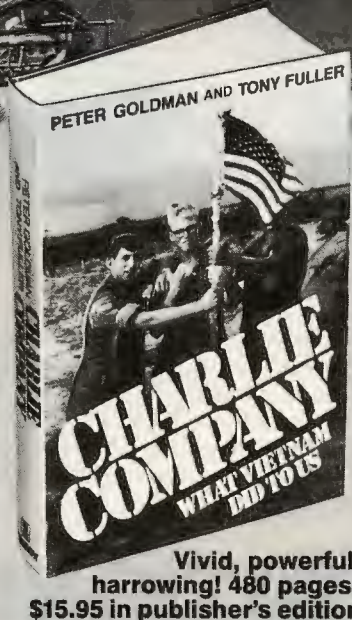
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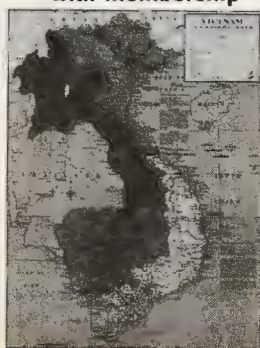
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OLD loyalties and sentiment aside, my H&K 91 is about my favorite rifle. It's ugly, heavy and has a less-than-match trigger, but it's reliable, comfortable, and chambers more different kinds of ammo with less complaint than any other .308 I've got. The only problem is that I need optics for top accuracy.

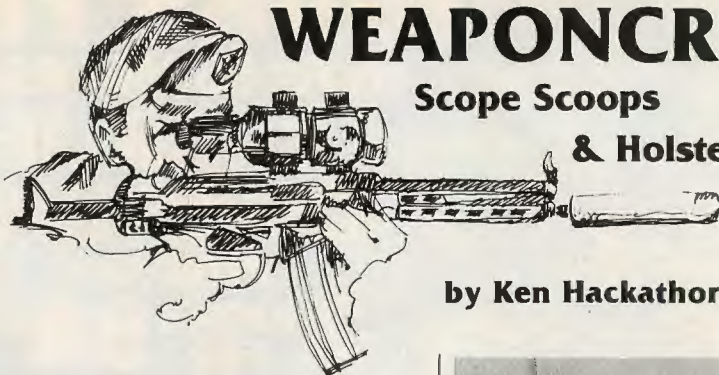
The H&K scope mount is simple, rugged, and tends to stay zeroed when removed and reattached, but it doesn't work for all optical sights. The standard 30mm mount is \$180, adapters for one-inch tubes are \$22, and you need a third piece of equipment for Aimpoints. The rail mount for other optical sights is another \$150, and it doesn't work with many new optical sights.

A.R.M.S. Company (Dept. SOF, 230 W. Center St., West Bridgewater, MA 02379, phone: [617]584-7816) makes a mount for H&K assault rifles that fits nearly everything. The Swan Scope Base retails for \$145 and will accept the Aimpoint, *Armson* OEG, Single Point, many of the currently available night vision units, and the Leatherwood ARTII/MPC. Furthermore, the Swan Scope Base will accept Weaver-type scope rings, and thus mount conventional one-inch scopes.

The Swan mount is solid steel in your choice of Parkerized or black chromate finish. It grips the receiver cover firmly at six points, cammed in place by a low-positioned snag-free lever. Attachment closely resembles that of the H&K mount.

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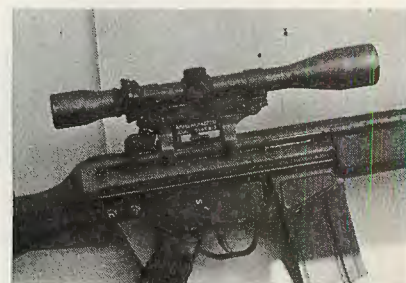


by Ken Hackathorn



Slick and strong: Behlert's Ultra-Hideout (left) and Champion. Photo: Ken Hackathorn

Swan Scope Bases are cheaper and more versatile than the H&Ks, and they hold zero when moved just as well as their German counterparts. Also, it seems that — for the time being, at least — the Swans are more readily available than the H&Ks.



High-tech accuracy with H&K 93 and Leatherwood ART combination linked by new Swan Scope Base. Photo: Ken Hackathorn

IPSC shooting strives to preserve realism in competition, and that is emphasized in the holster regulations. Still, some people manage to come up with competition rigs that would serve little practical use as everyday working gunleather. Frank Behlert makes holsters that work for both. Behlert Custom Guns, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 227, Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852), makes and sells a full line of practical and competitive custom holsters, but two of the most interesting models are the Ultra-Hideout and the Champion.

Inside the pants, the hand-molded Ultra-Hideout comfortably secures a pistol while the gunman's clothes help smooth the weapon's outline for easy-access concealment. A built-in sight protector smooths the draw and special internal contours permit use with rounded, squared and hooked trigger guards. Its adjustable belt-loop allows the shooter to tune the Ultra-Hideout for his best draw angle in crossdraw or strong-side wear.

The Champion is a more conventional outside-the-pants holster. It, too, is made of hand-molded leather for a variety of handguns. Tension adjustment attached to a reinforced top-band makes this a secure rig for work or contests. Although the Champion's regular belt carry is not usually associated with concealment, this holster, with its good design and careful craftsmanship, effectively masks and slims the profile of a pistol.

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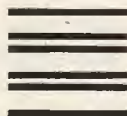


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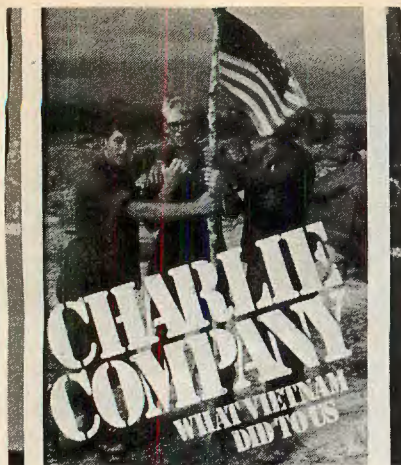
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CHARLIE COMPANY: What Vietnam Did to Us. By Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller. William Morrow & Co., 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. 1983. 358 pp. 42 photos. \$15.95. Review by Bill Brooks.

PETER Goldman and Tony Fuller are reporters for *Newsweek* Magazine. They interviewed 65 members of Co. C, 2d Bn., 28th Infantry Rgt., "Black Lions," 1st Infantry Div., who served in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969. These interviews offered many of the men the first chance they had to recount their experiences during their tour in 'Nam.

Most of their recollections revolve around sad accounts of misdirected fire fights, snafued ambushes and unnecessary casualties in a war they perceived as being led by concerned, but ill-trained, NCOs and unconcerned ticket-punching officers.

Motivated by duty, the men tell of a war where the only goal was survival. They tell of shared misery and the reality of a combat soldier's life. They were soldiers whose lives depended on the skills of their comrades. **Charlie Company** is a moving, disturbing examination of what these 65 men saw, did and felt — and most importantly what their experiences did to them when they returned home.

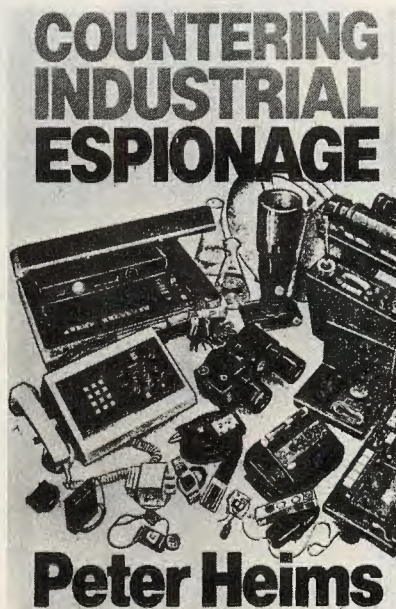
They left Sumter and Sioux Falls, Ohumwa and Kalamazoo largely without question and did what their country asked them to do, waging infantry war that taxed their bodies, abraded their souls — and came to have no purpose beyond individual survival. Their having been sent to an unpopular war and received home in abashed silence made them victims of indifference, victims denied the debt of honor a nation owes its soldiers, who were burdened instead with its shame, whether for having waged the war or for having been defeated in it. Their travail was what Vietnam did to them. Our silence is what it has done to us.

Elite units have one great redeeming characteristic — they have will, the will to fight and the will to die. An unbreakable will, that even radiates in defeat — a square-shouldered look in the eye that tells your captors you are still as good as they

IN REVIEW

and you gave as good as you got. To defeat an adversary you must break his will.

In **Charlie Co.** there were soldiers with will, but the will was lacking in the nation and, more sadly, in the Army's leadership. **Charlie Company** is a condemnation of the U.S. Army in Vietnam because the will had been gone before some of these pathetic individuals set foot in-country. I love every man in this book but I thank God I was not in Charlie Company.



COUNTERING INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE. By Peter A. Heims. 20th Century Security Education, Ltd., 293 Kingston Rd., Leatherwood, Surrey, KT22 7NJ, England. 1982. 290 pp. \$32.00 U.S. overseas air mail. Review by John Metzger.

INDUSTRIAL espionage is theft, "but is usually a more complicated affair than merely putting your hand into somebody's pocket," says internationally-known security expert Peter Heims in his book, **Countering Industrial Espionage.**

The stealing of secrets has flourished in our increasingly complex world, and is more of a problem than ever — especially with the incredible level of sophistication attained by industrial spies. In a concise text, Heims tells us just how universal

industrial espionage is, how it is growing in scope and sophistication, the methods used and how these can be countered. The book is a must to anyone involved in industrial security work who is concerned with keeping his firm's secrets safe.

Examples and actual accounts showing the tremendous spread of business spying is covered — everything from investigating methods to legitimate sources of competitive intelligence. This extremely detailed book has nine appendices and is divided into three parts: Part 1, "The Threat," defines industrial espionage, and gets right into the methods of secret-stealing, from cameras to computers; Part 2, "Prevention and Cure," covers the security-related formation of company policy and "vetting" (the process of inquiring into the character and background of employees in which Heims goes into the techniques of personal investigation and the use of the polygraph); Part 3 describes industrial espionage and the law in the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Economic Community.

Some of the instances in which industrial security was endangered may well surprise some readers. Highlights mentioned in the book include attempts by French customs officials to steal secrets through Swiss bank accounts, efforts to steal a company's chocolate-making secrets, the battle to safeguard design secrets from "fashion thieves," how undertakers steal each others secrets, the KGB and industrial spies, the exchange of industrial spies for military spies, qualifications of the professional industrial spy, and the use and counteruse of bugs, cameras and computers.

Heims combines in readable form a general background and history for the whole subject, supported by a wealth of up-to-date information as to the techniques employed and the steps which companies, individuals and organizations can and should take to protect their interests from industrial espionage. Heims concentrates on how to *counter* would-be saboteurs and spies in their attempts to damage and steal secrets of processes, production plans, ideas and sources of materials, labor and information. Damages done by industrial espionage are often irretrievable and this book tells how to protect a company's interests and bring the culprits to book. ✕

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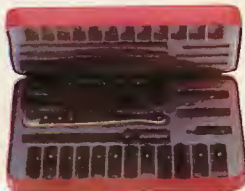
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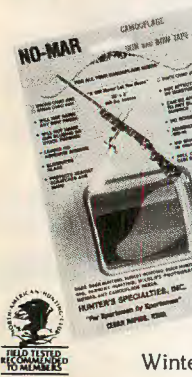
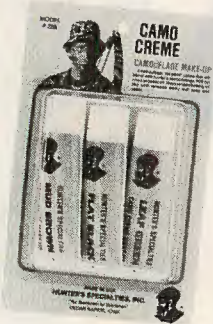
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IT HAPPENED TO ME

Second-Chance Pen

Steven Knopp as told to M.L. Jones



Steve Knopp hopes this police medal — awarded for bravery under fire, as described in his article — is the last he'll add to his collection.

Police Sgt. Steve Knopp received three Purple Hearts while serving in the Marine Corps in Vietnam, and he thought he was through having someone put holes in his body — but as he tells it:

ON 16 February 1980, I'd just come on watch when the dispatcher put out an armed-robbery-in-progress call. Another unit and I were only two blocks away. When we reached the drug store, the suspect was still inside, holding three people at gunpoint.

My partner and I crept inside, and a clerk whispered that the gunman was in the pharmacy. I moved to one side and my partner took the other. We waited until other back-up units arrived and four more police officers slipped in. We crouched, waiting for the robber to move away from his hostages.

When the gunman didn't move, I decided to shift to a position with a better field of fire. I crept closer until I was only 15 feet away from the gunman. I could hear him cocking his pistol and letting the hammer down. He kept telling the druggist, "Move faster, or I'll blow your head off!"

I wanted to take the suspect out — but I couldn't tell the other police officers what I planned to do. I could only hope that they would see what I was doing and follow my lead.

I was armed with a Remington 870,

loaded with 00-buck. I stood, bringing my front sight up to the middle of the gunman's head, and yelled: "Freeze! Police!"

Just then, a hostage walked between me and the robber and I had to raise the shotgun barrel.

The suspect whirled and fired a Ruger .357 Magnum. The Speer 150-grain hollowpoint bullet hit me in the chest, right over my heart. I went down, knowing that a fire fight had started as I blacked out.

At the hospital, I learned that the bullet had hit a steel-capped pen in my pocket and been deflected away from my heart. The round went across my chest, through my right lung, hitting two ribs before ricocheting and lodging in my right hip.

The suspect? He took 12 pellets of 00-buck. He's now in prison, serving 25 years.

I know I'm lucky to be alive — and lucky that the Alexander Pen Company makes such good products. I now carry one of their pens everywhere I go.

Because Warr Acres, Okla., awarded me its medal of valor for my part in capturing the robbers, I added *another medal* to my Purple Hearts — but I sure hope that I've added the last hole I ever get to my body.

Editor's Note: To those of you who say this must be a war story, SOF checked it out with the Warr Acres PD — it just goes to show that truth is often stranger than fiction. ☞

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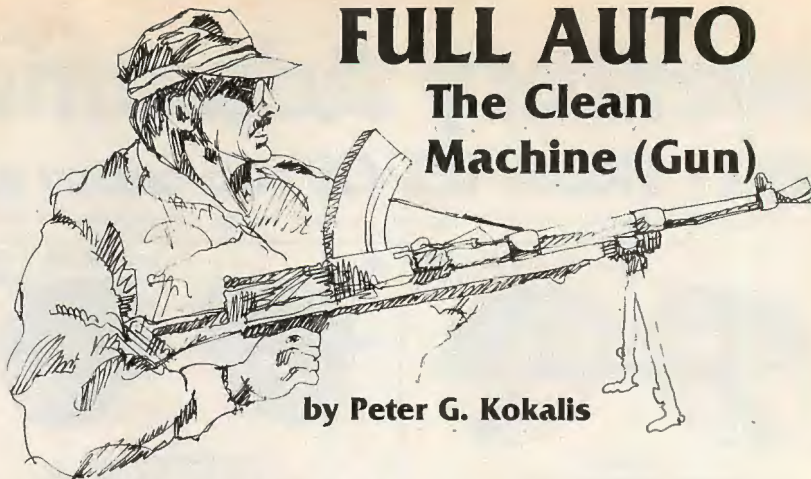
I often wonder if I have spent more time cleaning machine guns than shooting them during the last two decades. (I know I spent more time cleaning them during the years I spent as a grunt for Uncle.) But there is no better way to find out how machine guns really operate. In comparison, I once knew an individual who took perverse delight in cleaning his 1921/28 overstamped U.S. Navy Thompson with a garden hose. If that's your wont, then read no further. If, however, you're keenly interested, as I am, in keeping them cranking, then I'd like to share some insights picked up along the way.

What's so different about cleaning a machine gun? Most modern automatic weapons are gas-operated and this presents a very special set of problems. Many of the older crew-served weapons, such as the Maxim and Vickers, are large and intricate. An individual owner may spend many painstaking hours in their cleaning and maintenance if he hasn't acquired the correct equipment.

Let's take a look at the bore first. Use only GI-type steel cleaning rods. Brass or plastic-coated rods pick up a lot of debris and abrasive particles can easily become imbedded in them. Use brass brushes, but when severe fouling has accumulated in the bore around the gas port, switch to stainless steel. A pipe cleaner is useful for the barrel gas block and regulator vent holes. GI two-inch by two-inch heavy cotton cleaning patches are still available from B.W. Tracing Co. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 692-1065, Newark, OH 43055). They are excellent for bores of .30 to .45 caliber. Standard .22 LR patches work well in 5.56mm NATO bores if doubled-up.

Corrosive primed ammunition is still available in abundance. The NRA has done a great job of keeping its price down with periodic horror stories about the holes it will eat in barrels. Much of this mostly corrosive Berdan-primed ammo is still sure-fire and accurate. I use it all the time in almost every one of its available calibers. The primers contain potassium chloride, which is responsible for the rusting of gun barrels. In damp climates, this nasty reaction can take place in a matter of hours.

There are two alternatives that will dispense with all your anxieties about using corrosive ammo. Use CLEANER-RIFLE bore (CR), Spec MIL-C-372, available from Brock's Surplus (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 33242, Decatur, GA 30033). It was made specifically for this purpose and can be safely left in the bore. Beware, as no other mil-spec number will do. If left in the bore, other lots can cause greater damage to your priceless 7x57mm Mendoza light-machine-gun barrel than the corrosive primers themselves! If MIL-C-372 is not available, just use hot, soapy water and make sure the barrel is completely dry afterward. If you insist on using only non-corrosive ammo (certainly best, at least for sound suppressors) then Hoppes No. 9



by Peter G. Kokalis



bore cleaner will do.

Now that we have provided for the safety and well-being of our precious barrels, what about the rest of the black, sooty mess?

For the next part of our ordeal you will need a galvanized automotive drain pan, a large assortment (you'll never have enough) of nylon, brass and stainless-steel bristle brushes, cotton swabs and some scrapers (sharpened screw drivers are fine). The final ingredient in this assemblage is a solvent.

I started with gasoline. Gratefully, I survived that period of naivete and drifted on to paint thinner under the delusion it was less flammable. I stopped pressing my luck some years ago when I hit upon perchlorate ethylene, fondly known as "perk" to your neighborhood dry cleaner. It is non-flammable, relatively non-toxic (it cannot be mixed with grape juice and ingested), highly volatile (which means it evaporates quickly), fairly inexpensive (\$8 to \$9 per gallon) and leaves no scum or film. It can even be recycled. In short, it is ideal for cleaning firearms, especially large, dirty machine guns.

Saturate and scrub all the metal parts with a small quantity of perk from your drain pan. The scrapers should be used to remove powder residue off piston heads and the blast cones of recoil-operated, gas-assisted machine guns. Small, stainless-steel gunsmith brushes, like those available from Brownell's, Inc. (Dept. SOF, Route 2, Box 1, Montezuma, IA 50171), are also handy for this job. Avoid the temptation to clean the piston with a motor-driven wire wheel. It will remove metal as well as fouling.

A medium-sized air compressor is useful for drying parts and blowing debris out of trigger assemblies. An air compressor is to a machine-gun cleaner as a word-processing computer is to a writer — not totally essential, but once used, difficult to live without.

When parts are clean and dry, inspect for defects and breakage. Extractors should be examined closely as they take a terrific beating and are usually the weakest link in the machine gun's chain of operation. When you notice flat spots on the recoil spring, it should be replaced. Look for incipient etching on the fixed firing pins of submachine guns. This is caused by gas-blowback from pierced primers and is self-perpetuating. The only solution is careful stoning of any ragged edges. The bolt face's firing pin hole should be checked periodically on machine guns with floating firing pins. When oversized, the firing pin will sometimes jam forward in the protruded position, resulting in dangerous out-of-battery slam fires.

Magazines should also be disassembled, cleaned and inspected. Watch for spread feed lips, defective springs and dents in the body which prevent the follower from moving freely.

Lightly lubricate weapons before reassembly. I recommend G-96 (manufactured by Jet-Aer Corp., 100 6th Ave., Patterson, NJ 07524) or Break-Free CLP (available from Phoenix Associates, Dept. SOF71, P.O. Box 687, Boulder, CO 80306). Stay away from WD-40. It is not a lubricant and can deaden primers in a few minutes. Keep all lubricants away from the piston and gas cylinder. Tremendous heat is generated in this area and oil will bake into a hard film, difficult to remove. Belts for the MG 34/42 should be heavily lubricated just prior to use; otherwise frequent stoppages can be expected.

Don't forget the wood on older guns. Apply a mixture of equal parts of turpentine, linseed oil and vinegar followed by Renaissance micro-crystalline wax (developed for the British Museum).

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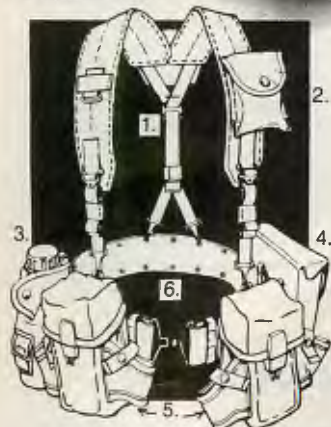
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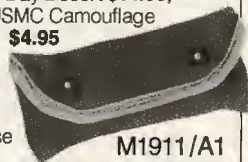
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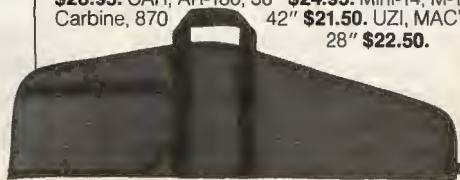
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CONGRESSIONAL COVERUP...

The House Intelligence Committee secretly withheld photographs and information that connected at least six Democratic congressmen with well-known KGB agent and World Peace Council President Romesh Chandra from an official committee report released in December '82, according to John Barron's new book, *The KGB Today: The Hidden Hand*.

Barron, senior editor for *Readers Digest* and recognized expert on the KGB, reports that Congressmen John Burton, Ronald Dellums and Don Edwards (Calif.), Ted Weiss, John Conyers, Jr. (Mich.), Charles Rangel and others were pictured and identified in a 1979 WPC 48-page brochure, which the House committee included — without the pages referencing the congressmen — in its 1982 report.

In all, 14 pages were deleted, without any notice, from the WPC publication as contained in the House report, which contained no page numbers. In addition to the deletions about the congressmen, references to union leaders from meatcutters and butchers, machinists, longshoremen and textile workers unions were also surreptitiously omitted.

MARINES CAN JOHN WAYNE...

Marines everywhere were saddened at the passing of an old friend. After 40 years of illustrious service, the P-38 "John Wayne" can opener has died a natural death.

Named after movie actor John Wayne, himself a great favorite of Marines, the P-38 was a constant and prized possession of Marines, often worn around their necks. But the introduction of "meals ready to eat" (MRE) in tear-open pouches to replace C-rats made the "John Wayne" obsolete.

Progress marches on.

SPECIAL FORCES CHAIRMAN...

Congressman Larry McDonald (D-Ga.) has been named chairman of the Special Operations Forces Panel of the House Armed Services Committee. The panel's primary purpose is to evaluate the nation's unconventional warfare operations and make recommendations to strengthen and improve that readiness.

The United States now keeps 30 percent of its Special Forces deployed away from home and 70 percent of the SF aircraft are either deployed or down for maintenance, according to Rep. McDonald, who is concerned that this intensive use will cause burnout of both men and equipment.

"Defense Department testimony has indicated that if we continue at this

BULLETIN BOARD

by Donna DuVall



SOF's Peter G. Kokalis passes out SOF badges to Salvadoran helicopter squadron at Ilopango Airbase. For full story, see Editor/Publisher Brown's report on p. 56. Photo: Alex McColl

pace, we will face catastrophic morale problems and systems failures," he said. "There is a need for a larger, better-equipped force to handle unconventional situations. The Special Forces are the only force we are actively using to counteract the very real Soviet threat and they [SF] are inadequately manned and equipped.

"In the coming months, we will be taking a very close look at all SF branches, their manpower and equipment needs and their increasingly important role in protecting the lives and liberty of American citizens and our allies from foreign aggression," promised McDonald.

RADIO FREE MOSCOW?...

Hardly, as a Moscow radio newscaster, Vladimir Danchev, found out when he criticized the Soviet Afghan policy. The 35-year old newscaster was promptly fired from his job with the English-language radio station and is being detained for "medical tests" to

determine his mental state.

The outspoken newscaster, who is a native of Uzbekistan which borders Afghanistan, criticized the Kremlin's policy in five different broadcasts because he said he was opposed to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and, had he not been fired, he said that he would have continued his broadcasts. He advised the Afghan rebels "not to lay down their arms and to fight against the Soviet invasion of their country."

Although Danchev has been silenced, many Western observers think that internal criticism of the Soviet role in Afghanistan hasn't been. In the four years since the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, they have suffered heavy casualties.

OPERATION HASTINGS SURVIVORS...

After reading "Three Battles, Part I" in July's SOF, Tony Marra, a survivor of the battle, called to thank SOF for its coverage of the battle and to try to contact other participants. Marra was a corporal in I Company, 3/4 Marines and was with the first group that landed during Hastings. Any one who would like to get in touch with Marra can contact him at Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, Va., or by phone (804) 381-5873 during office hours.

RUSSIANS SLAUGHTERING AFGHANS...

In an announcement that is accurate but certainly not new, the U.S. State Department accused the Soviet Union of killing perhaps thousands of civilians in Afghanistan "in bombing raids that amounted to slaughter intolerable by any standard of civilized behavior."

John Hughes, spokesman for the State Department, cited numerous reliable reports from Afghan refugees which "leave no room for doubt that casualties from the raids certainly number many hundreds and probably are in the thousands." He said civilian casualties were especially high near Herat, Afghanistan's third-largest city, and in the area north and west of Kabul, the capital.

"It would appear that the Soviet Union believes that the world is either unaware of or no longer cares what it is doing in Afghanistan.... We cannot stand silently by and witness this slaughter," Hughes concluded.

SOF agrees with State's assessment of the Afghan situation, but this country has stood by and watched the Russians brutalize the brave Afghans for four years, and for even longer in other parts of the world.

SYRIAN DRUG TRAFFICKING...

Former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon claims that Syria will not leave Lebanon's fertile Bekaa Valley because Syria receives as much as a half billion dollars per year from the hashish grown there. As evidence, Sharon cited the 1982 UN Report of the International Narcotics Control Board, which traces drug trafficking, including hashish and heroin, from Lebanon to Syria, then Turkey and the West.

"Multi-ton shipments leave Lebanon by ship and smaller quantities are smuggled out via overland routes," the report asserts.

CUBAN AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULTS...

In what is clearly a show of offensive power, Cuba for the first time has been displaying its "first really sophisticated, integrated display of amphibious capability," posing a real threat to Carib-



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BEATE



"Like the old saying goes: 'If you can't BEAT 'em... BOMB 'em!'"

bean islands, according to a Reagan official.

One U.S. specialist, who quoted reports that 400 marines, four light tanks and eight APCs had been spotted rehearsing amphibious landings near Mariel Beach, called the development a serious one because it shows that "Cuba is developing the capability to project force all over the Caribbean." Castro clearly wants to become a major actor in the Caribbean military theater.

HIGH FLYING ADVICE...

For its recent trip to El Salvador, the SOF team flew TACA, El Salvador's international airline. Their flights got them where they wanted to go without long delays and with courteous, efficient service, above-average food and refreshments, and relatively painless baggage transfers. What more can you ask?

This pleasant flight was in marked contrast to their trip last February on Mexicana Airlines, by way of Mexico City. Not that Mexicana isn't a good airline. Rather, the problem is officialdom in Mexico City.

Everywhere else in the world — at least where SOFers have been, and that's damn near *everywhere* — when you have a two-hour layover in a country you're just passing through, the baggage stays on the plane and the passengers are escorted to a lounge, more or less isolated from customs, and invited to spend their money in the bar and "tax-free" shop. No fuss, no forms, no inspectors pawing through your underwear.

But not in Mexico City. For a layover there, passengers are put through the whole form-filling, rubber-stamp-pounding, luggage-lugging drill that includes an airport exit tax that, if my

memory serves, comes to about \$3. To be paid, of course, in pesos, so you have to stand in line at the bank window to exchange three dollars into pesos so you can leave a country you didn't want to be in anyway.

The bottom line is: SOF recommends TACA as the painless way to get from the *pais de los gringos* to the land of good coffee and sunshine. TACA has flights to Guatemala City, San Salvador and other Central American points from Los Angeles, Houston, Miami and New Orleans. This method of travel is much preferable to the old MATS charter flights from Travis Air Force Base, and is one of the few advantages to having a war so close to home.

NIXON ON EL SALVADOR...

Former President Richard M. Nixon predicted that the United States could expect a flood of Salvadoran refugees if El Salvador loses its fight against the communists. Citing the problems the United States had with 800,000 Cuban and 150,000 Nicaraguan refugees, Nixon warned that the number from El Salvador could reach two million.

OLD SWABS FOR OLD SHIP...

The Navy is looking for a few old sailors — at least 300 of them — to sail the USS *Iowa*, the huge WWII battleship that is being reactivated after 30 years' retirement. The newly polished *Iowa* will carry a crew of 1,500, at least 300 of whom should be veteran sailors who know how to sail a ship like they used to make. So any former sailors, 48 to 50 years old, who know how to operate the ship and want

Continued on page 104

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE is happy to announce that our 1983 CONVENTION will be held at the beautiful Sahara Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 6-9 October 1983. Convention information is as follows:

CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Three Gun Match 5-7 October
 Seminars & Films 6-9 October
 Military Arms & Collector's Show 7-9 October
 Rhodesian Jump & Air Assault School 6-7 October
 Firepower Demonstration 8 October
 Awards Ceremony 8 October

Questions or requests should be directed to:

Convention Director Nadine Rick
 P.O. Box 693 or Convention Assistant
 Boulder, CO 80306 (303) 449-3750

Rooms are available at \$38 per room single or double occupancy at the HQ Hotel; the Sahara Hotel & Casino reservation line is 1 (800) 634-6666. Identify yourself as an SOF conventioneer.

THREE GUN MATCH: The world-famous Three Gun International Combat Shooting Match will be held at the Desert Sportsman Rifle & Pistol Club, 5-7 October. Entrance is by invitation only and competitors must write for application. This year 150 shooters will compete for \$50,000 in cash and prizes. Cash prizes will be given for 1st through 15th place; gifts will reward 16th through 25th place finishers (based on overall score). Minor prizes include cash awards for top-score Police, Military, Middle Man and First Time SOF Shooter. Cash awards and prizes for top five places in individual rifle, pistol and shotgun competition will also be given. Shooters entry fee is \$160, which also will include free entrance to all convention activities. All shooters wishing to bring a guest to the range must purchase a Range & Awards Ceremony Guest pass for \$35. Passes are limited to ONE per shooter and must be purchased in advance since they will not be on sale at the Convention nor to the public. Transportation to the range will be provided for all conventioners, shooters and guest. Shooters registration begins at 1200 hrs., Tuesday, 4 October in the Sahara Hotel Space Center Lobby.

CONVENTIONEERS: Pre-registration fee is \$100. This provides free admission to all activities and events, and includes one Awards Ceremony ticket. All convention activities, with the exception of the Military Arms Collector's Show, are closed to the public. Pre-registration forms must be *postmarked no later than 25 September 1983*. You may pick up your convention schedule and badge any time between 1200 hrs. 4 October and 1400 hrs. 8 October 1983 at the Sahara Hotel Space Center. Requests for refunds must also be *postmarked NLT 25 September 1983*. ALL CONVENTIONEERS MUST PRE-REGISTER.

PARACHUTE JUMP SCHOOL: This year the Albuquerque Parachute Center will host the Parachute Jump School, 6th and 7th October 1983. Captain John Early, formerly Officer Commanding of the Selous Scouts Airborne Strike Force and Chief HALO Instructor for the Rhodesian Security Forces, will be heading the airborne operations along with many former instructors of the Rhodesian Para School. Upon completion of the first jump course, jumpers will be dispatched on a simulated operational fire force airborne assault. The first jump course will be \$120 per person. Cost for experienced jumpers will be \$50. *All jumpers must pre-register as a Conventioneer*. Experienced jumpers must have a copy of current military orders placing them on jump status or a current log book showing that they have jumped within the past 90 days. Experienced jumpers are encouraged to bring their own gear for free-fall mass jumps. Interested persons must send their *jump fee* to: Albuquerque Parachute Center, 2326 Don Felipe S.W., Albuquerque, NM 87105; *Conventioneer fees* should be sent to: SOF Convention, Inc., P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.

MILITARY ARMS & COLLECTOR'S SHOW: Our 100- booth and 200-table exhibition is being held 7-9 October in the beautiful Sahara Hotel Space Center. Table rates are \$75.00 per six-foot table. Booth rates are \$150.00 per 8x10 foot booth. Exhibitor service kits will be sent to all booth buyers. We urge you to reserve early; last year's show was a sell-out.

1983 SOF CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION FORM*

MAIL TO: CONVENTION DIRECTOR, P.O. BOX 693, BOULDER, CO 80306

_____ FIND MY CONVENTIONEER CHECK OR MONEY ORDER (\$100 per person). \$ _____
 (List each Conventioneer's name, address & telephone number)

_____ PLEASE SEND COMPETITIVE SHOOTER APPLICATION.

_____ PLEASE SEND MILITARY ARMS SHOW TABLE APPLICATION

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

*Pre-Registration form must be postmarked NLT 25 September 1983.

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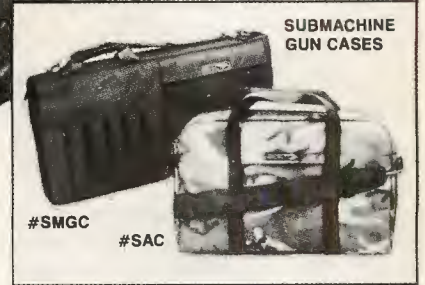


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#SMGC Submachine Gun Case. For UZI, Ingram Mac 10 & 11. 6 Outside Mag pouches plus handgun and accessories compartment. \$60

#SAC Special Agents Case. For anything and everything. Holds short

barrel UZI, Mac 10 & 11. Fully padded main compartment. Outside pocket. \$46.95

#P Pistol Cases. 3/4" Foam padded, full opening, lockable, water-proofed nylon handles. #P10 10" \$11.50; #P12 12" \$13; #P14 14" \$14.50; #P20 20" \$16.

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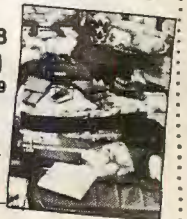
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FLAK



Continued from page 6

POW/MIA SPECIAL

Whether Gritz is a hero or a huckster we left up to the reader to decide. But we disagree seriously as to who has achieved what result. The thousands of hours and millions of dollars spent by the government and media running to ground the truth in the "Lazarus Affair" would have been far better spent pursuing other leads. While it did bring the issue of POWs to the public eye for a brief period of time it also did substantial damage to sincere efforts and may have the long-term effect of discrediting the issue. — The Eds.

I'd like to request an apology — or should we try a thank you? The articles in your POW/MIA special issue are very amusing to say the least; especially the one on me.

After reading it, I realized you are not professionals. So, knowing that I could expect yellow journalism, may I set some facts straight.

1) There are four small rivers on the Cambodian/Thai border. Task-force 80 sits on one. We crossed Stoeng Huoy Sei River. (See your maps.)

2) Vinney Arnone was not on Operation Grand Eagle. You should read the *Los Angeles Times*, 21 February 1983. They identify all of Grand Eagle's members.

3) When I arrived in Bangkok in June of '81. Your now "forgotten source" is mistaken: I didn't check into the Nana until two days later, at 0347 hours, and no one was there in the lobby. I came in with Robert Moberg.

4) Your publisher, Mr. Brown, approached me and even paid one week's stay at the Hotel Nana and meals [for me] with his American Express card, so that he and Coyne could talk to me.

5) You fail to mention I submitted, at Mr. Ted Koppel's request, to five very extensive, in-depth polygraph tests by former world-famous CIA examiner, Chris Gugas, and passed all five 100 percent. Especially questions on the "hit" order and many more. You also fail to mention that I took several psychological tests by Dr. Fredrick Hacker, Jr. He too is very well-known and respected. Again, I passed all tests 100 percent.

I'll agree on one thing. Bo is nuts. But I was there; I did the things; I passed the tests.

Many thanks to Col. Brown. I believe he is a man of honor. As for you editors,

well, not knowing you, I don't know.

Scott Barnes

P.S. Mr. Graves: I have never talked to you from Hawaii.

1) There is a "Stung Houei Sai" river near the Thai-Cambodian border (South-east Asia Map Series ND 48-9, 1/250,000). Problem is that's not the place you told Dawson you crossed.

2) Vinney Arnone — according to Gritz, other Grand Eagle participants who gave us affidavits and people who were working for us — was in Bangkok just after you got into a fight with another team member over how to operate a camera. You may not have seen him or known his role but he was part of Grand Eagle or BOHICA.

3) Robert Moberg is a good friend of ours and was well known to the two individuals who were in the lobby of the Nana Hotel when you checked in. If Moberg was with you he came as Casper the ghost. But to be fair we'll ask him.

4) It is a well-known fact that SOF Publisher Robert K. Brown is sought out all around the world by "busted" adventurers and is the world's softest touch, provided one has a good enough "hard luck story." There is an unconfirmed rumor that just days before he was killed by Bolivian Rangers Ernesto "Che" Guevara hit Brown up for meal money in a cantina in Bolivia's outback. Since "Che," who called himself a Soldado de Fortuna and actually was one — but for the wrong side — had a good story I wouldn't be surprised if it's true. Brown, who, when we last talked with him, was having dinner with some scruffy-looking adventurer in a scruffier-looking restaurant in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, denied the "Che" rumor but admits he did pay your bill for a week.

5) We had read those claims before and didn't consider them relevant and they were not worth the phone money it would have taken to check them out. As a matter of routine journalists and shrinks don't reveal the results of such tests unless they print a story. Why didn't Koppel run with the story if it's that good and you passed the tests? Could it be that the fact you passed the test and the truth have no relationship to each other?

P.S. I did talk with you from Hawaii. Somewhere in our warehouse we have the phone logs from that time period which would show your incoming call and since Earl Bleacher placed a call to you from our office our bill from Ma Bell would show a call to a number you could be reached at in Hawaii. — Jim Graves

The "classic detective novel" entitled *The Maltese Falcon* was penned by Dashiell Hammett and not Raymond Chandler as you state on page 2 of your special MIA/POW issue. Moreover, the detective who runs down the worthless bird is Sam Spade, and not Philip Marlowe.

As near as I can tell, you are guilty of the same sin as Gritz. By marketing a full-color, high-speed hatchet job on that fool, and charging three bucks a copy, you too are profiteering from his sojourn into Laos.

I suggest you shy away from the murky issue of POWs in Southeast Asia and concentrate on something more cut and dried, like the Roosies in Afghanistan or the latest war movie out of Hollywood.

Don Pugsley

Los Angeles, California

To get to the bottom of this mysterious misidentification, SOF went right to the scene of the crime: Executive Editor Bob Poos's office. When confronted with the evidence, Poos replied, "Elementary, my dear fellows, elementary. While stalking the elusive Maltese author, I chanced upon a remarkable discovery. Dashiell Hammett was never seen with Raymond Chandler; nor did he ever use Philip Marlowe in any of his works. Likewise, Chandler never used Sam Spade in his. Right away, I knew that I was on to something big. Some further sleuthing confirmed my startling find: Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler were the same person, and therefore, Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe are the same character and all can be used interchangeably." The mystery of the mistaken whodunit has been solved.

Seriously, Spade/Marlowe is based on a real-life, hard-nosed, ham-fisted detective who is still alive and whom Publisher Robert K. Brown is going to hire to beat up all the editors who let the mistake get through.

SOF does try to make a profit but "profiteering?" If we break even on the POW/MIA special we are going to have the wildest damn blowout anyone has ever seen in Boulder. Brown has guaranteed me that if we make a profit I get a gold star and I get to take the profits to Afghanistan to be used in a suitable manner. We did the Special because 1) the story just kept growing and growing and would not fit in our normal format, and 2) we have been considering an experiment on Special issues for a long time. If this one breaks even or even comes reasonably close we'll do more of them on other subjects we think you'll like. — Jim Graves

Congratulations on an excellent job: The POW/MIA special issue was really done well. The only thing I would like to have seen added is a very short official biography of Lt. Col. Gritz. There were hints here and there, but little to go on: Where did he get all those medals? Surely not for his work as a strategist, or even a tactician. His performance in the various "operations" described in your issue would hardly have earned a passing grade for a plebe in tactics one.

One wonders just what did happen? A presumably competent man — from my

EDITOR'S NOTE

Continued from page 2

Gritz went back to Thailand on 13 May, ostensibly to scout locations for a movie to be made about "Operation Lazarus," but amid speculation that this was merely a cover for another rescue attempt into Laos.

The Thais already had their hands full with three of seven Americans who had been in Nakhon Phanom since mid-April and had reportedly slipped across the border into Laos. Although the names of some of the seven were released, it is not known exactly who they are, what their purpose was or even if they had actually gone in.

Meanwhile, three Canadians beat *Soldier of Fortune's* reporter, Lian, to the IDT box left behind by Gritz's group after the November fire fight which broke up "Operation Lazarus." Capt. Lima, who had attacked the Gritz team on 30 November, attacked a guerrilla leader named Akhien (who was with Gritz on 30 November and to whom we had given the *nom de guerre* Thene Kham in our Special), who had the IDT in mid-May. Capt. Lima, who works for guerrilla chief Kham Bou, killed six of Akhien's men and recovered the box. SOF had offered a case of whiskey for it, but Lima sold it for about \$10,000 to three Canadians, who SOF believes were acting on behalf of Litton Industries or the U.S. government.

In late May, Gritz team member Lance Trimmer delivered a long tape-recorded message from Gritz to the *Bangkok Post* in which Gritz stated that although he would not violate the spirit of the law he might break the letter of the law. He also referred to the "dark and evil" forces out to get him.

On 1 June, the Thai government declared Gritz and four other "Operation Lazarus" team members *persona non grata* and ordered them deported.

It would appear that the Thais have finally reacted to "the forces" — the increasingly skeptical media, the DIA, representatives of the NSC and leaders from the various POW/MIA groups — who thought Gritz was harming the cause not helping.

There may not be as much publicity in the future regarding POWs — often the best results on issues like this are obtained from quiet efforts — but here at SOF, we're convinced the search for an answer to the fate of the unaccounted-for Americans will continue. — Jim Graves ✕

limited experience, they tended to promote on guts in the old SF, but, lordy, there was a minimum level of understanding — retires and becomes Mickey Mouse? There ought to be a good story there. Or perhaps a novel. . . .

I did, once upon a time, get a doctorate in psychology, and I suppose I could come up with a few explanations, but I confess I am *nonplused*. Which is why I'd like to know a little more about his career prior to his becoming Lawrence of Indochina.

Dr. Jerry Pournelle
SOF Contributing Writer

It is unfortunate that the best journalism often results from tragic events. The

POW/MIA subject certainly could be a synonym for a shameful American tragedy and your special edition on that topic was a paragon of research and investigative reporting. You and your entire staff deserve the utmost congratulations on producing a truly remarkable written perspective of a problem that demands a national priority to resolve.

Larry Wilson
Baltimore, Maryland

On a scale of zero to three, your magazine consistently rates 2.6 or better. Then along come issues like June, July and your special on the Gritz fiasco. If I could give a grade higher than 3.0 for each of those issues, I would. They were each outstand-

ing. I get more straightforward, no-bullshit information and facts from SOF than all other publications combined. I'm tired of the same old biases evident in the national press and media and my own local branch of the same. They consistently give press coverage to bubble-heads such as Fonda, Asner, et al., simply because of their name appeal.

From some of the end-line hyphenations in the July issue it is obvious that your new word-processing system (or operators) still has some bugs to be ironed out. Such are the joys of modern technology.

Henry Plawer
Quincy, Illinois

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the POW/MIA special, but I have one issue to bring up. On pages 29 and 30 the printer, I assume, repeated the copy. I hope they didn't leave something out that may have been interesting. As an MI NCO for the U.S. Army, I most rightfully have a suspicious mind!

A Concerned Southeast Asia Vet

The repeated copy and the wrong end-line hyphenations along with some really strange spellings in the special issue came as a result of our new word-processing system which has some of the biggest, meanest "bugs" we have ever seen. The special was the first issue we put out on the system and between hardware crashes, bugs and just general wear-and-tear on the editing staff, who turned out a 72-page special while producing two regular issues, some editing snafus did slip by. In the long run our front-end computer will help us make Soldier Of Fortune a better product. — The Eds.

Not only did you bring factual and informative justice to Bo Gritz, but articles like "The Pawns of War" by Will Brownell, "The French Experience" by Milt Copulos and "Vigil for a Missing Son" by Jim Morris are each worthy of a 60 *Minutes* episode in themselves.

I am positive that not only is the American public misinformed on the POW/MIA issue, but most so-called journalists for our many prestigious newspapers, magazines and television stations are worse than misinformed — they don't even care.

You and your staff continue to perform a service the American people need more than they can imagine. Your dedication and loyalty to the truth sets a standard I wish more people would recognize, if not live up to.

Marty Hornstein
Los Angeles, California

After reading your special (POW/MIA) I can only say . . . DAMN! Not only could

Continued on page 96

“IF YOU WANT A GOOD FIGHT...”

UPI Combat Correspondent Joins the Cavalry

Text & Photos by Joe Galloway

Editor's Note: When SOF first received Robert Oles' two-part series on the Plei Me/Ia Drang Valley/Chu Pong Mountain campaign (see "Bloody Ia Drang" and "Winning One for Gary Owen," SOF, March, April '83), we immediately began searching for an eye-witness account to accompany it. Executive Editor Bob Poos recalled that Joe Galloway, then a UPI reporter/photographer, had been at LZ X-Ray all during the battle there. He contacted Galloway, who consented to do an on-the-spot report. Due to his busy schedule, Joe couldn't get it in until just before final deadline. We felt the piece was so good that it shouldn't suffer being cut to fit in the April issue. So here it is now.

LIKE all good war stories this one began simply enough.

In the early fall of 1965, sitting with the Marines in Da Nang, I persuaded Tiger Switch to patch me through to Puma Switch and on through several other pieces of the exasperating military communications net to the UPI bureau on Ngo Duc Ke Street in Saigon.

After four or five months of sloshing around through paddies and running along ridges with the Marines in I Corps, I was no longer a green war correspondent. I knew the difference between incoming and outgoing, had seen men die on both sides and had walked an eerie hilltop in Quang Ngai Province where every man of a Vietnamese Marine battalion and four American advisers lay dead in their fighting holes.

I was also being eaten alive by paddy foot and crotch rot and my plea to the boss was for a change of scenery and altitude. A few weeks in the cool, dry central highlands, working out of MACV Headquarters in Pleiku, was just what the doctor ordered. Besides, with the recent arrival of the 1st Air Cav at Anh Khe there would be some good features to write as the newcomers started working their territory.

I caught the milk run, a clapped-out old C-123 that hauled anything and everything, including reporters, from Da Nang north to Hue-Phu Bai and then back south to Pleiku. The milk-run bird only ran in a straight line

when it was taking you somewhere you didn't really want to go.

From the airstrip at Camp Holloway I hitched a jeep ride over to MACV where I found the public information officer (PIO), Capt. Larry Brown, a cordial host dispensing bunks in his animal room, or mosquito heaven as we also called it, where the command chaplain sat in on a nightly poker game and was widely accused of rattling his beads when drawing to inside straights.

From MACV I could hop back to Holloway to visit a host of fellow Texans who jockeyed helicopters. Bob Oualline, a good pilot from Arkansas Pass, introduced me around and the groundwork was laid.

Working out of Pleiku, I made occasional runs to check on progress at Anh Khe with the First Team. From a somewhat rocky start — I can recall reflecting one evening on the inexperience of troops who suddenly dove for cover when the duty VC sniper opened up during nightly showings of old *Combat* television segments — the Cav was settling in pretty well, getting its choppers on line and flexing its muscles.

By October, everyone smelled trouble in II Corps.

By early October 1965, everyone could smell trouble in II Corps (south of I Corps). The ARVN forces were light, scattered — and scared. The American field presence was mostly scattered in isolated Special Forces camps with names like Plei Me, Dak To, Dak Sut, Dak Pek and MACV compounds in Pleiku and Kontum.

Gen. William Westmoreland was more than a little concerned. He warned Washington that the communists were poised for an all-out offensive to cut South Vietnam in two. We had all read Bernard Fall's books, and the sight of those white stone markers where French *Group Mobile* 100 was ambushed and annihilated in the

Mang Yang Pass between Anh Khe and Pleiku was enough to raise the hair on the back of our necks. It was only 12 short years since Vo Nguyen Giap's regulars ate up GM 100 and now another North Vietnamese army was building for battle in the highlands.

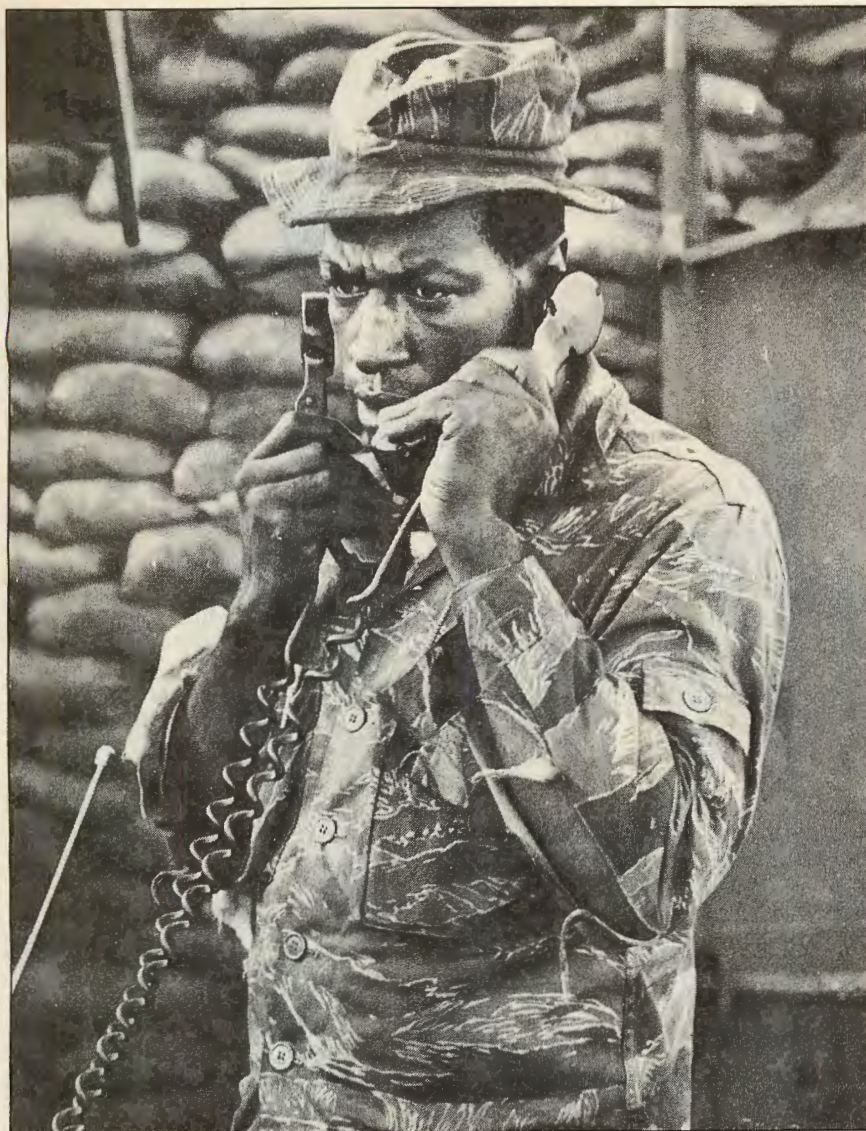
Unknown to us at the time, Hanoi the previous June had established the B-3 Western Highlands Front under direct North Vietnamese control. The NLF, the Viet Cong, had nothing to do with this. Maj. Gen. Chu Huy Man, a member of the Hanoi Central Committee, was in field command and he held no brief involving people's war. Man intended to use the dry season to knock out those bothersome Special Forces camps and blind American eyes to his buildup and troop movements as he moved to put pressure on the thin ARVN line.

For the past year, regular North Vietnamese regiments had been training and undergoing indoctrination under a policy laid down by Gen. Nguyen Chi Thanh that envisioned head-to-head combat with the Americans. Gen. Thanh believed he could so bloody them that political pressure at home would end their troop buildup. Giap had his doubts, but let Thanh go ahead.

The base area for Gen. Man's forces and headquarters would be near Chu Pong Mountain and the Ia Drang River valley, astride the Vietnam-Cambodian border. With supplies and men pouring down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Gen. Man's three PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam) regiments assembled and readied themselves for battle — the first full North Vietnamese division to swing into action since Dien Bien Phu.

When everything was ready, Gen. Man set his troops on the march. His first target would be Plei Me Special Forces camp on National Route 6C — a road that was more a memory than a national highway. Plei Me camp's 400 Montagnard mercenary defenders and their families and the dozen American Green Berets who led them were resupplied entirely by air.

On the evening of 19 October, the 2,200 men of Gen. Man's 33rd PAVN Regiment slipped out of tunnels and launched wave attacks against the barbed-wire barriers sur-



Project Delta's Executive Officer fields two handsets at once while directing air and artillery strikes around besieged Plei Me Special Forces camp.

rounding the triangular camp. Surprised defenders poured fire on the attackers, blunted attempts to penetrate the wire and held firm until daybreak on the 20th when air support from Pleiku and Da Nang could be called down on the surrounding brushy hills.

The first helicopter to try and make it into Plei Me that morning was ripped apart by heavy anti-aircraft fire from tripod-mounted Chinese versions of the .50-caliber machine gun. Their sights were crude but they closed Plei Me to all but the most daring chopper pilots. This was to be no hit-and-run affair.

As tac air plastered the hills with napalm and high explosives (HE), PAVN gunners made the planes fly through a curtain of fire and downed several A1E Skyraiders and one B-57 Canberra bomber.

Ammo, food and water were being parachuted in — but the camp was small, the fire intense and more often than not the defenders stood helplessly as bundles of goodies dropped into enemy laps.

II Corps commander, Gen. Vinh Loc, was persuaded — with difficulty — to dispatch an armored relief column large

enough to bull through the inevitable ambush — only after his American counterparts, Gen. Stanley (Swede) Larson of Field Force Victor (FFV) at Qui Nhon and Gen. Harry W. O. Kinnard, CO of the 1st Air Cav, guaranteed him that the Cav would also dispatch forces to reinforce and secure Pleiku. By 23 October, the ARVN armored column — 16 tanks, 15 APCs and 1,200 men — moved cautiously down Route 6C toward Plei Me and a Cav Brigade task force was on its way to Pleiku.

Ten miles down the road, the 32nd PAVN Regiment sprang its expected ambush on Vinh Loc's relief column. With artillery support, the ARVN circled up the wagons and hunkered down for a tough fight that night and most of the next day. With American encouragement and support, the ARVN column did not break and run as usual. The 32nd PAVN wasn't finding it as easy as they expected.

Meanwhile, Plei Me camp was getting a new commander and some stiffening of its own. Maj. Charles Beckwith — who commanded the Special Forces Delta Teams —

and a hand-picked squad were helilifted into the vicinity of Plei Me at night and then crawled through the rings of PAVN troops. Just before dawn they dashed through the wire in a hail of automatic-weapons fire.

We had drawn straws for the few places on Beckwith's mission and I had lost. I stood on the tarmac at Holloway so goddam mad I couldn't talk. As I stalked the flight line I ran into one of my fellow Texans and explained my problem. He commiserated and allowed as how he was sort of interested in getting a look at the action.

The next morning he said words to the effect of "Screw the Army and those sitreps that say you can't fly into Plei Me. Let's go." We went.

(When then-Col. Charlie Beckwith led the raid into Iran [see "Who Dares Wins," SOF, June '79], I pulled my photo file to find some snaps of him, and ran across the first sight I had of Plei Me camp. I shot the picture and even today it scares me. The chopper was laid over on its side, diving through PAVN machine-gun fire. Its open door frames the besieged camp. Mortar bursts are raising clouds of choking red dirt. Smoke from napalm and artillery bursts rises from the jungle.)

My buddy dropped the chopper into Plei Me. I jumped out before the skids hit. It was the first chopper they had had on the ground in a long time and in seconds it was stacked full of wounded and old Tex was pulling pitch like a madman and making obscene gestures at me. Seconds later a Special Forces sergeant tapped me on the shoulder and said: "Son, Maj. Beckwith wants to see you and he sure is mad. He's the fellow over there jumping up and down on his hat."

The Beckwith tirade began: "I need ammo, water, food, medevac, reinforcements. I need everything. And the Army, in its wisdom, sends me a fucking reporter. Well, you ain't a reporter no more. You are a corner machine-gunner."

Then Charlie stopped, grinned, drew a breath and asked who was that crazy SOB that flew me in on that chopper. "I need more pilots like him."

Two sleepless nights later, the ARVN relief column arrived to break the siege of Plei Me. With it came the inimitable Bob Poos, my friendly competitor from the Associated Press. I asked what took him so long and got the standard two-word reply.

Late on 25 October, Gen. Man pulled back his two regiments, leaving behind a reinforced battalion to maintain some pressure on Plei Me. Suddenly the sky filled with more helicopters than I had ever seen at one time. The First Air Cav had arrived. I said my goodbyes to Charlie Beckwith, accepted his offer of an M16 and ammo, then joined a column of troops marching through the moonscape around the battered camp. The bombing left trees stripped and twisted. Your nose told you the enemy had died by the hundreds. The stink of death filled the air.

One more strange image lingers from the Plei Me defense. Maj. Beckwith's execu-

tive officer was a strapping six-foot, six-inch southern black. He juggled three radios through the fight, coordinating air and artillery strikes and guiding the relief task force in safely. Suddenly he held out the handset of one of his PRC-10s and told Beckwith, "Charlie, the President wants to talk to you."

Beckwith responded, "The president of what, for Christ's sake?" The XO grinned big and shot back, "Charlie, the man says he is the President of the United States."

It was Lyndon B. Johnson himself, patched through a dozen Tiger Switches with the reddest of priorities to talk to His Boys in His War. While mortars thumped and napalm cannisters whooped and an air supply drop floated down, Charlie Beckwith was told how proud his President was and how well he was defending the frontiers of freedom.

Charlie interspersed the conversation with a few "yessirs" and finally was allowed to get back to fighting the war.

Meanwhile, Gen. Westmoreland flew up to Nha Trang and told Swede Larson that maybe they ought to give Harry Kinnard and the Cav their head with orders to "find, fix and destroy" Gen. Man's PAVN.

I headed back to Pleiku to file my stories, ship my undeveloped rolls of film, bathe and change uniforms, and sleep in one of Larry Brown's bunks.

Gen. Kinnard knew exactly who could carry out the job of finding and fixing the PAVN and turned the task over to Lt. Col. John B. Stockton and his 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry recon unit.

As the battered 33rd PAVN struggled to reach the supposedly safe rear area around Chu Pong Mountain, Stockton's choppers buzzed all over the formerly secure valleys and Cav infantry units leapfrogged over the hills with their batteries of 105mm howitzers slung below the Chinooks. Together, they kept the 33rd on the run and away from its caches of food, ammo and medical supplies. In the process, the Cav troopers captured intact the PAVN regimental hospital and valuable documents detailing the 33rd's supply caches and march routes. All routes pointed toward Chu Pong and the Ia Drang Valley and by 3 November, Stockton decided to insert a recon platoon into an LZ on the slopes of Chu Pong for a night ambush.

That evening all hell broke loose. The 66th PAVN Regiment felt secure and safe in its base area. One of its battalions moved along a well-beaten trail, the men laughing and talking as they walked through Capt. Charles B. Knowlen's 19 men hidden in brush behind their claymore mines. The Vietnamese even stopped to cook rice for supper within smell of the ambush platoon.

Knowlen waited until the North Vietnamese were back on the move and held off until the heavy-weapons platoon got in his kill zone. He was afraid the rising moon would soon reveal his position so he touched off his claymores and laid a wall of rifle and M79 grenade fire into the ranks of the stupefied communists.



By the time 1st Air Cavalry arrived at Plei Me, surrounding landscape had become a "moonscape" from repeated shelling and airstrikes aimed at attacking North Vietnamese.

In two minutes, Knowlen's men were hotfooting it back to LZ Mary where two other ambush platoons had been alerted to get back to patrol base and things were buttoning up for trouble. In that LZ also waited Charlie Black, one of the finest combat correspondents to grace the battlefields of Vietnam or any other war. (See "Charlie Black," SOF, April '83.)

"Twenty men and they ambush a whole goddam battalion," Black would later tell me. "Jesus, it was beautiful. You should have been there."

Within two hours the mauled PAVN battalion, minus heavy weapons, had located the patrol base and begun its probes. The battle was joined. Helicopter gunships roared in to pour rocket and machine-gun fire into the North Vietnamese. By 0130, Stockton fed in the rest of A Company with groundfire riddling each chopper as it dropped into the LZ.

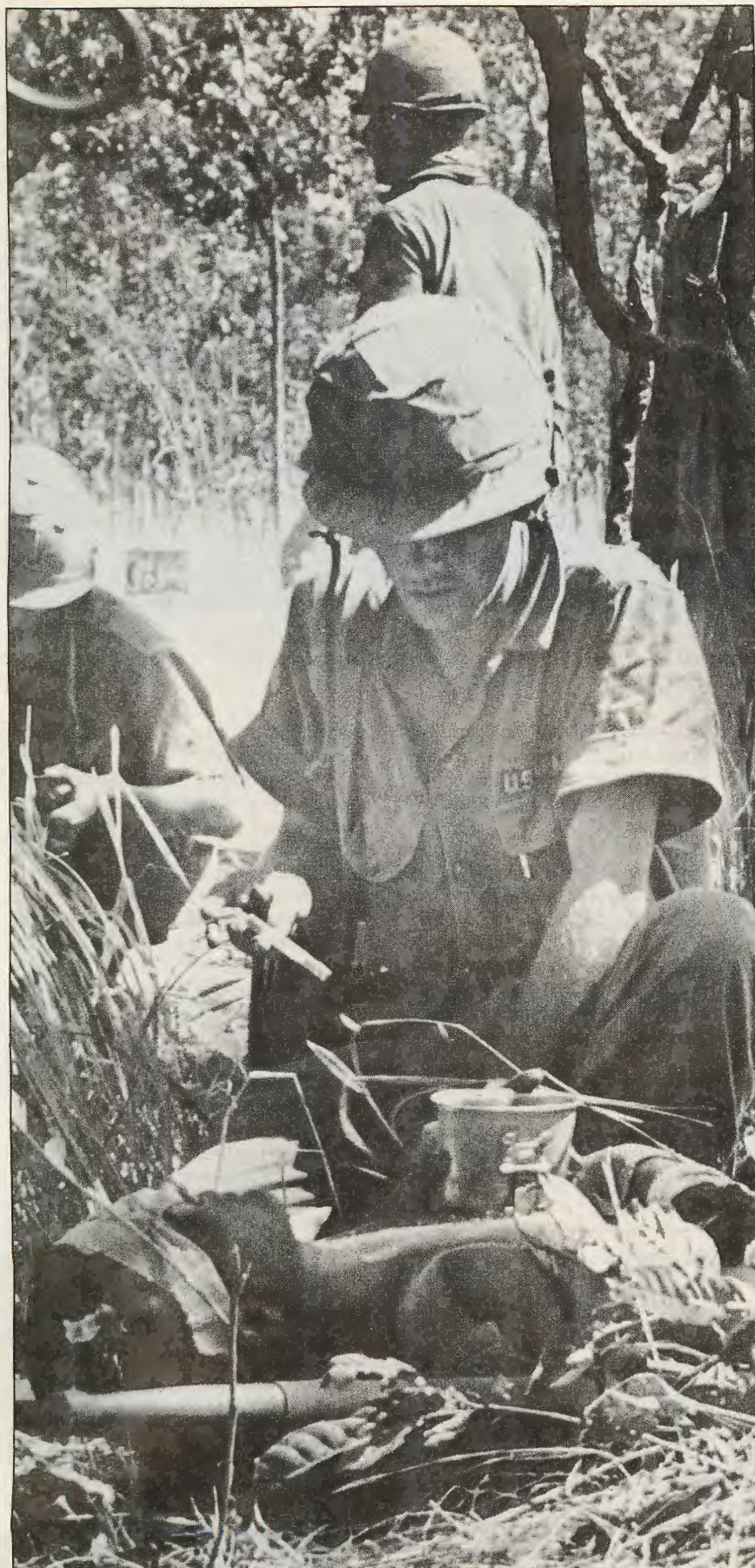
The LZ stood off two more communist attempts to overrun it before first light when Stockton airlifted the rest of 1/8 Cav into it.

If the American commanders had had any lingering doubts, they now knew for certain there was a third PAVN regiment in the area.

On 9 November Gen. Kinnard rotated his forces, moving the fresh 3rd Brigade under Col. Brown in to replace the 1st. Kinnard ordered them to focus operations east of Plei Me. The maneuver confused the North Vietnamese commander and he decided to have another shot at Plei Me, this time using the 66th Regiment. The 33rd had to be reorganized as a composite battalion (only 800 effective troops were left after the opening rounds of the campaign).

Col. Brown set up 3rd Brigade headquarters in the old French tea plantation at Catecha. A sign planted outside the ops tent identified the operation as "Shiny Bayonet."

As his troops fanned out for recon and medcap visits east of Plei Me, I hooked on with Lt. Col. Harold G. (Hal) Moore's 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, who were headed up the hills.



Medic treats wounded trooper near Col. Hal G. Moore's CP at LZ X-Ray during Ia Drang Valley battle.

My memory is of one of those awful, hot afternoons spent hacking and crawling through some of the meanest wait-a-minute briar patches and the most aggressive red tree ants you'd want. Once, it took us *two* hours to cover maybe 200 meters.

Just before nightfall, Moore waved the battalion across a narrow but chest-deep mountain stream of ice water and then we buttoned up with a cold can of C-rats, no fires, no smokes, no lights. I would later spend three years in Russia and endure 50-below-zero cold but I would never be colder than that night at 6,000 feet, wet and shivering inside my poncho.

At daybreak I pinched off a chunk of C4 explosive from my emergency stock and fired it to boil the fastest cup of coffee in the Western world. Then I looked around to see 1/7, including Col. Moore, all busy shaving in their tin pots. If I had any lingering doubts that this unit ran just a bit differently and with a lot more pride they were taken care of when Moore walked over and suggested that if I was attached to them I could damn well shave too. I did.

Later we would march into a curious and remote Montagnard village so far from civilization and the news that one old man emerged from the longhouse on stilts, hastily buttoning up a tattered old army coat and happily waving the French tricolor flag. He was sure that his brethren of decades ago had kept their promise and returned. I'm not sure we ever adequately explained the situation to his satisfaction.

Later I lifted back to Pleiku, shipped film and stories and then heard that on the night of 12 November the Brigade HQ at the tea plantation had been heavily probed. I hitched back out.

I talked to a sergeant who almost single-handedly had broken the attack. He had been squatting in a foxhole near the dirt airstrip, loading M16 clips for his outfit. The good sergeant had about 150 loaded clips stacked in his hole when the flag went up and the bad guys started assaulting across the open airstrip. His hole filled with empty brass as he slid the selector to rock 'n' roll and knocked them down like crazy. He burned up that M16 in a good cause. When he finally quit firing, the flash protector fused into a lump over the end of the barrel.

I decided to stick around and see if there would be a rerun *that* evening — and Brown's staff told me that Hal Moore's 1/7, which was doing perimeter guard that night, would be lifting into a new operation the next day. Brown said I could hitch a ride in his command chopper shortly after the LZ was secured.

I wandered on down to the perimeter, found a squad that welcomed the company and dug myself a foxhole beneath one of the teabushes. The troops were grouching that they had been warned to be careful about the bushes because the French owners would bill the U.S. government \$25 for each damaged or destroyed, and \$125 for each rubber tree in the plantation over on the next hill. The planters had been down yelling

about the damage from last night's scrap.

As we broke out the C-rats, I asked the man in the next hole what the date was. "The 13th" was his reply.

"It's my birthday," I told him. He laughed, wished me a happy one — and flipped me his cap of pound cake. We agreed it was one hell of a place to spend your 24th birthday.

The next morning, after a spooky, sleepless but quiet night, I went down to watch Moore's troops load up and begin lifting off for the assault at the base of the Chu Pong massif. Moore had selected LZ X-Ray for the assault because it was the biggest of three possible landing zones, able to take between eight and 10 choppers at a time.

After artillery and gunship prepping, Moore's lead company hit the LZ just before 1100, with Moore and his command group coming off the first chopper.

Moore set up his command post (CP) in the middle of a patch of ant hills — six to eight feet tall and hard as concrete, these ant hills were a prominent feature of the terrain — in a copse of trees. Elephant grass obscured the view. Some dry waist-deep creek beds ran along the northwest side of the LZ. One hell of a defensive position but so far the bad guys weren't defending.

On the mountainside above the LZ, PAVN regulars had spotted the landing, figured it for company size, and their commander from previous experience of the Cav's leapfrog operations reckoned that further reinforcements were not likely to be coming. He decided to send two battalions from the 66th Regiment and the 33rd Regiment's composite group down to wipe out the Americans.

So far no action. I hung close to the ops tent back at the tea plantation.

Capt. Tony Nadal's Alpha Company was lifted in even as Bravo Company troops were flushing and capturing a weary Vietnamese who had been lost in the brush. The prisoner told Col. Moore that there were at least three PAVN battalions in the area.

Moore decided to send platoons from Bravo on up the northwest ridge to snoop around. They had gotten barely 100 meters when things started to pop.

Lt. Henry Herrick's 2nd Pln. pushed ahead although North Vietnamese rushing down the mountain trails drove a wedge between his platoon and the flanks, and snipers in the trees and ant hills were beginning to chew on the Americans. The brunt of the growing PAVN assault fell directly on Herrick's platoon.

Moore today says the communists were surprised to find the Cav troopers still moving ahead when they were hit. The PAVN commander was also surprised to find that most of a Cav battalion, 1/7, had been lifted right onto Gen. Man's doorstep. PAVN Field Front reacted by ordering the 8th Battalion of the 66th Regiment to reverse its march toward Plei Me and return to help cover the base camp from the surprise assault.

Meanwhile the air lift was bringing in



CIDG troops and Special Forces men rush to recover supplies after one of the few successful air drops at Plei Me during the siege. Most drops landed behind North Vietnamese lines.

Charlie Company and the lead elements of the weapons company. This time the PAVN were in the tree line shooting the choppers full of holes. What had been a cool LZ was now hotter than hell.

Moore moved Nadal's company up to assist the besieged Bravo units just in time to run headon into what one survivor would later call "all the gooks in the whole damn world."

Artillery and tac air were hammering the terrain while the PAVN were using their potato-masher grenades, mortars and those nasty little rocket-propelled grenades (RPG).

Back at the tea plantation, the ops tent was getting noisy and busy and I was pressing Col. Brown for my promised ride into action. Brown also wanted a firsthand look at the situation, so we headed off in his chopper for X-Ray.

A 25-meter circle of death and destruction.

When Brown told Moore he was overhead and wanted to land, Moore told him no way. Choppers were downed and men killed in that last lift and the LZ was simply too hot. As I looked out the left side of the chopper, trying to make sense out of the smoke and confusion below, an A1E Sky-raider screamed below us trailing smoke and fire and slammed into the forest.

No parachute.

Brown reluctantly ordered the chopper to turn around and leave X-Ray, dropping me off at LZ Falcon where the supporting artillery batteries were located and where I stood

a better chance of hitching onto a medevac or supply chopper.

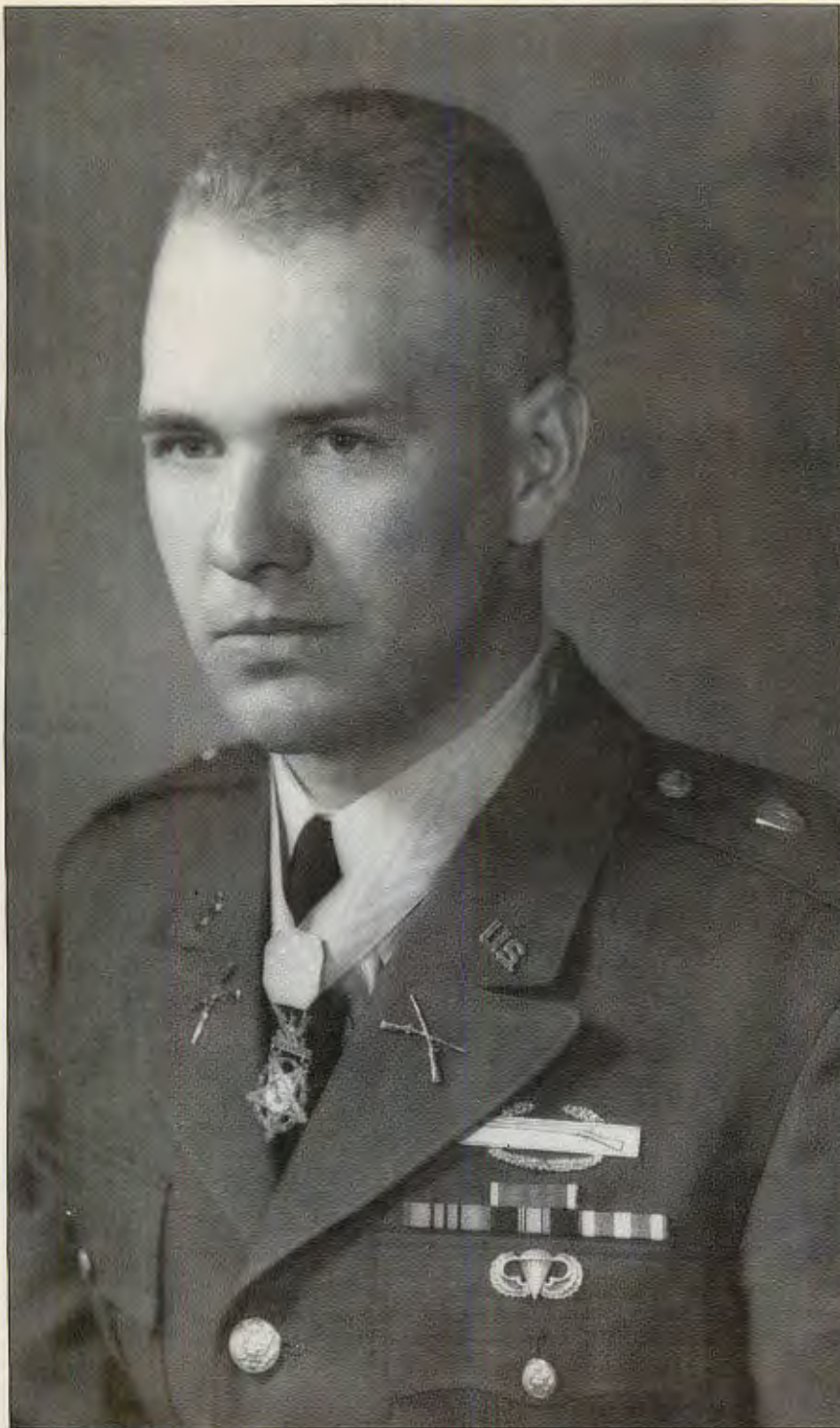
By 1500, Moore had radioed Brown, asking for at least another rifle company for reinforcement — while up the mountainside Lt. Herrick's Lost Platoon held desperately to a 25-meter circle of death and destruction. They were surrounded and whoever moved got hit. Herrick went down. The PAVN overran the machine gun providing covering fire and turned the gun around to use on the surviving Americans.

The dying Herrick handed command over to Sgt. Palmer, but within seconds a grenade blast killed Palmer. Another sergeant moved to take Palmer's place and died instantly of a bullet through the head. Sgt. Clyde Savage then took command, grabbed the radio and walked the artillery in until he had drawn a curtain of shrapnel around the platoon.

Helicopters managed to get some desperately needed ammo and water into the LZ at late afternoon.

Moore ordered another desperate effort to relieve the Lost Platoon up the ridgeline. Leading one of Tony Nadal's platoons, Lt. Joe Marm ran into PAVN entrenched in one of the ant hills. He tried to take them out with a LAW rocket and then, in desperation as the PAVN machine gunners were picking off his men, Marm stood up and charged the position with a grenade. As he mopped up the last few survivors with his M16 a sniper round smashed his jaw. Marm's bravery would win him the Medal of Honor but that afternoon it failed to clear a path through to Herrick's platoon.

As night fell, Moore ordered both the stalled companies to pull back to the perimeter, and informed Savage that he and his



First Lt. Walter J. Marm, Jr. won Medal of Honor for a single-handed assault on PAVN position while attempting relief of cut-off platoon. Photo: U.S. Army

men would have to make it through the night on their own.

The reinforcements — Bravo Company of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cav — lifted into the LZ at dark.

Back at LZ Falcon, I ran into the familiar figure of Capt. Matt Dillon, Moore's ops officer and a man I had chatted with on that hike into the hills: "Matt, I've got to get in there."

He shook his head but when I kept after him he said he would put it to Col. Moore. In the ops tent Dillon got on the radio and

told Moore that he was coming in with a final load of ammo and water in two choppers: "And that reporter Galloway wants to come along." Moore responded that if I was that crazy and there was room on a chopper to let me come.

Shortly after 2000, 14 November, we lifted off LZ Falcon bound for X-Ray. I sat on a stack of cases of ammo and hand grenades. The rest of the load was C-rats and plastic five-gallon containers of water.

We came in low and fast and on the way down I saw flashes of light up and down the

mountainside that I was sure were muzzle flashes. Dillon saw them too but reckoned they were signal lamps to guide PAVN reinforcements down the mountain to the killing ground. Either way the sight was not reassuring.

We grazed the trees dropping into the LZ and then were on the ground bailing out into the darkness. I grabbed the boxes I had been sitting on and threw them out. In seconds the supplies were out, wounded on and the pilots hauling out.

A gruff voice came out of the dark as Dillon and I stood up. "Watch where you walk. There are a lot of dead bodies around and they're all American." That was my introduction to Sgt. Maj. Basil Plumley of Columbus, Ga. It was his battalion and those were his dead.

Plumley guided us to the patch of ant hills and trees where Moore's CP was located. Fires lit the distant slopes of Chu Pong. Artillery rounds came in with that strange sound that always reminds me of freight trains moving by at a distance.

Hal Moore shook my hand and pulled me down beside him. "I don't know why you wanted to come but you're here and you're welcome. Things are tough and they're likely to get a lot tougher."

Moore told me of Herrick's platoon up on the ridge and said they and we would spend the night in a ring of artillery fire to keep the PAVN off our backs. Flare ships were on call and Puff the Magic Dragon would be around to hose the bad guys with his miniguns.

The CP group had their backs against a decent-sized ant hill. Nobody was dug in except the Vietnamese Kit Carson scout who had burrowed into that ant hill until not even his boot soles were visible — and happily remained there for the rest of the battle.

I picked me out a nice tree and leaned back against it, watching and listening and loading some clips for Charlie Beckwith's M16. Sometime between midnight and 0300 I dozed off and the last thing I recall was Sgt. Maj. Plumley draping his poncho liner over me. That great grizzly bear — veteran of three wars — tucking me in like one of his grandsons. When I awoke I was almost buried beneath a layer of leaves, twigs and branches cut out of the trees overhead by passing shrapnel.

Up on his ridge, Clyde Savage had walked the arty right up on top of his thin lines and hunkered down. He found he was in a good spot to keep an eye on the PAVN as they organized their attacks against the LZ and he took some pleasure in adjusting the 105 battery fire to scramble things up for the PAVN every chance he got. Beginning around 0345 the Lost Platoon had to fight off a series of PAVN charges signalled by bugle calls.

Down below we stirred in the darkness. Col. Moore was hoping that elements of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cav, poised at LZ Victor, could lift in to reinforce at daybreak. No such luck.

Just before 0700 8th Battalion, 66th PAVN, hit the southeast sector, slamming into Capt. Robert Edwards' Charlie Company. Although Edwards called for reinforcements, Moore held off committing his slender reserves in Charlie's sector, suspecting the PAVN might be hoping he would do that. Hal Moore was right. By 0715 another PAVN battalion was knocking on our eastern door, and half an hour later yet another tried the western sector.

We were catching it from three sides and those little RPGs were whizzing into the LZ and around the CP with monotonous regularity.

Suddenly in the middle of this, a Cav trooper across the LZ got up, wearing only a white T-shirt and fatigue trousers, and began walking slowly straight across the open LZ while bullets kicked up dirt around him and the RPG explosions rocked him. We screamed at him to get down or go back and finally our calls got through over the noise of battle. Slowly he turned to walk back and we could see that his back was shredded by shrapnel. The aid station was next to the CP and the stunned trooper was simply taking the shortest route.

Matt Dillon and I were both thinking on the same theme this morning: Up until now the greatest tradition of the 7th Cavalry had been built at a place called the Little Big Horn with Col. George C. Custer in circumstances uncomfortably similar to those we now found ourselves in.

About this time I was busy trying to see just how flat I could make myself and cursing the buttons on my fatigue jacket for costing me the edge. I felt a size-12 boot toe in my ribs and looked up to see Sgt. Maj. Plumley standing tall and grinning big: "Son, you can't take no pictures laying down there on the ground."

I decided Plumley was right. I also decided that our chances of coming out of this alive were somewhere between slim and nothing and with Plumley for an example I decided I would just as soon get mine standing up. I got up, ignoring the fire sweeping over us, and began taking pictures.

Midmorning of the 15th we got a lull. Air and arty had been making things hot for the PAVN. Or maybe it was rice time. I walked out to the edge of the LZ. A trooper jumped out of a mortar pit about 25 meters away and dashed in my direction, diving beneath a bit of brush. All I could see was two eyeballs under the helmet. "Joe Galloway. Are you Joe Galloway from Refugio, Texas? Don't you know me, man? It's Vicente Cantu from Refugio."

And so it was. We came from the same little oil and ranching town in south Texas. Graduated from high school in the same year, 1959.

In the blessed lull we stole five minutes for a class reunion. "Joe, this is bad shit. But if I make it I go home in two weeks. I'll be in Refugio for Christmas." He did and he was.

While the lull lasted, I walked another 20 or 30 meters and squatted down to talk to



UPI Combat Correspondent Joe Galloway at Da Nang Press Center complete with tools of the trade: a Nikon 35mm camera with zoom lens and the Carl Gustav 9mm Model 45 SMG, better known as the Swedish K.

some troopers dug in in some elephant grass; then as the sound of firing began picking up, I headed back to the CP. As I reached the anthill I heard someone in the command group scream, "My god, he's unloading on us. Stop him, stop him!"

The Air Force officer handling forward air control began yelling into his mike and I looked up to see a Skyhawk nose up and a nice fat cannister of napalm separate and begin loblollying end over end straight at us. We froze. Quit breathing.

Nothing to do now.

The cannister went right over the CP and exploded between us and the troopers I had just been talking with minutes before. There was a wall of fire and then I could see our men dancing in that fire and hear their screams over the fire noise. As the blaze

faded to burning grass several of us ran into it. Someone told me to grab this man's feet and help haul him back to the aid station. When I grabbed him the meat over his ankles twisted away in my hand.

Twenty meters and the CP would have been gone with CO, XO, air controller, artillery controller. And one reporter. Those burned men in the aid station would scream for hours. All the morphine in the world wouldn't have stopped them. Most of the water we had brought in the night before still lay out in the LZ grass. It was partly to get away from those screams that I got up and made two trips out to haul water back to the aid station.

During another lull that morning, one platoon from 2/7 airlifted into the LZ and went straight into battle reinforcing Charlie



Combat-weary trooper from 1/7 awaits orders to move out at end of battle of Ia Drang Valley.

Company. The rest of 2/7 hiked overland from LZ Victor and two of its companies immediately moved out with Herren's men to find and extract the Lost Platoon.

Strangely unopposed they finally reached Savage's small group and told them it was okay to get up. Sgt. Galen Gungum recalled, "We thought he was nuts. Not one of us got up." Over 70 North Vietnamese bodies were piled around the platoon's perimeter.

With reinforcements in hand Col. Moore pushed our lines out 100 meters. The expansion uncovered hundreds of the dead from both sides intermingled in the elephant grass, giving mute testimony to the vicious hand-to-hand fighting that had taken place.

That afternoon Matt Dillon passed the word to keep an eye on Chu Pong Mountain for a spectacular show. On schedule 24 B-52 stratoforts from Guam laid a carpet of 750-pounders on that mountain and permanently rearranged some landscape.

That night we settled in to a quieter evening. A few light probes to keep everyone alert. But Gen. Man wasn't through with us yet. Five of his best battalions had been broken against LZ X-Ray and the 7th Cavalry. Although PAVN had spotted the platoon that came in by helicopter they apparently missed the arrival of most of 2/7 Battalion by foot. Down the mountain they came for one more big shot and again the defenders' fire along with tac air and artillery chewed them up.

Before dawn Col. Moore had Dillon radio around and get an ammo count from the companies. Everyone was fairly fat, especially the new arrivals. Moore had Dillon order every man to take two clips, select for full-auto and "shoot whatever the hell you don't like the looks of out front of you."

On signal everyone opened up. Moore's hunch paid off. A company of PAVN was crawling up on the perimeter. They thought they had been discovered when the

shooting started and jumped up, launching their attack prematurely. Alert troopers with their clips laid out in front of them cut the hapless North Vietnamese to ribbons. Later we found some of those PAVN still lying in the grass where they had been crawling, shot right in the tops of their hats. On other parts of the perimeter wary troopers shot up the treetops and bagged several roped-in snipers, waiting for good shooting light.

Thus was born the "Mad Minute" in Vietnam combat. Hal Moore later would say that he thought it would be a good way to build confidence in his troops — and a good way to clean up the perimeter by fire

"Son, you can't take no pictures laying down!"

rather than sending recon units out for the PAVN to chew on.

Later that morning the rest of 2/7 marched in and Brigade HQ radioed that the boys from 1/7 could march for home.

As the fresh troops and reporters marched in, they looked at Hal Moore's men with wonder and amazement. When a few rounds roared in the newcomers hit the dirt. We were long past that. It was only background noise.

Hal Moore came over. He grabbed my shoulders. "You go back and tell the world how well we fought and died here. Go tell them." Tears cut trails through the red dirt on both our faces.

Later Moore would send a message to my boss. "I knew what I was doing there. I'm a professional soldier and it was my job. But I couldn't understand what Galloway was

doing there. He was a civilian. He didn't have to be there. But there he was, propped up against that tree with that M16 across his lap."

Just before I joined 1/7 in grabbing a chopper bound for Camp Holloway, Lt. Col. Robert McDade, who was commanding 2/5 and part of 2/7, suggested that I march on up the valley with his unit. "We're going to go catch what's left of them." I shook my head, told McDade I had to go file my story of the last three days, and warned him to watch his ass because there was still more than enough PAVN out there to go around.

McDade's battalion would march into a PAVN ambush strung out over a mile-long column in heavy elephant grass and thousands of ant hills. A debacle would ensue, a battalion would be broken and cut to shreds. But that is another story.

In the final analysis, the men of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, policed up the battleground at LZ X-Ray. We had won the first meeting of American regulars and North Vietnamese regulars.

Back at Camp Holloway, Gen. Westmoreland walked down the ranks of 1/7 troopers shaking hands. Medals would shower down. A Presidential Unit Citation would be added to 1/7's flag. Lt. Col. Harold G. Moore of Bardstown, Ky., would be promoted to full colonel and given command of his own brigade. Early the following year — 1966 — in Operation Masher/White Wing, Moore would march his troops into coastal valleys where the Viet Cong had reigned untouched for 15 years.

Wherever I happened to be hanging my pack, Moore would send word to come on back to Anh Khe because he was onto something I might be interested in. I always went and it was always interesting.

Half a dozen times Moore and I would be sitting in some mess hall or bar and overhear some officers moaning aloud about some 10-day operation that had been a walk in the sun and wondering why they couldn't get in a fight.

Moore and I would grin and walk over to inform them that we had a six-figure map coordinate for a place we guaranteed they could get all the action they wanted.

Later in 1966 one Cav unit indeed heli-lifted back into LZ X-Ray and promptly got in one hell of a fight.

Back in Anh Khe, Sgt. Maj. Plumley composed a little barracks ditty that encompassed one lesson we would never forget:

"We have met the boys from the North; They came to fight and not to play."

I would spend another decade in Asia and return to Vietnam for tours in 1971, 1973 and again in 1975 for the end of the whole mess. I would pound the jungles in lesser-known conflicts in Indonesian New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Bangladesh. None of it would match the intensity of those three days in November 1965.

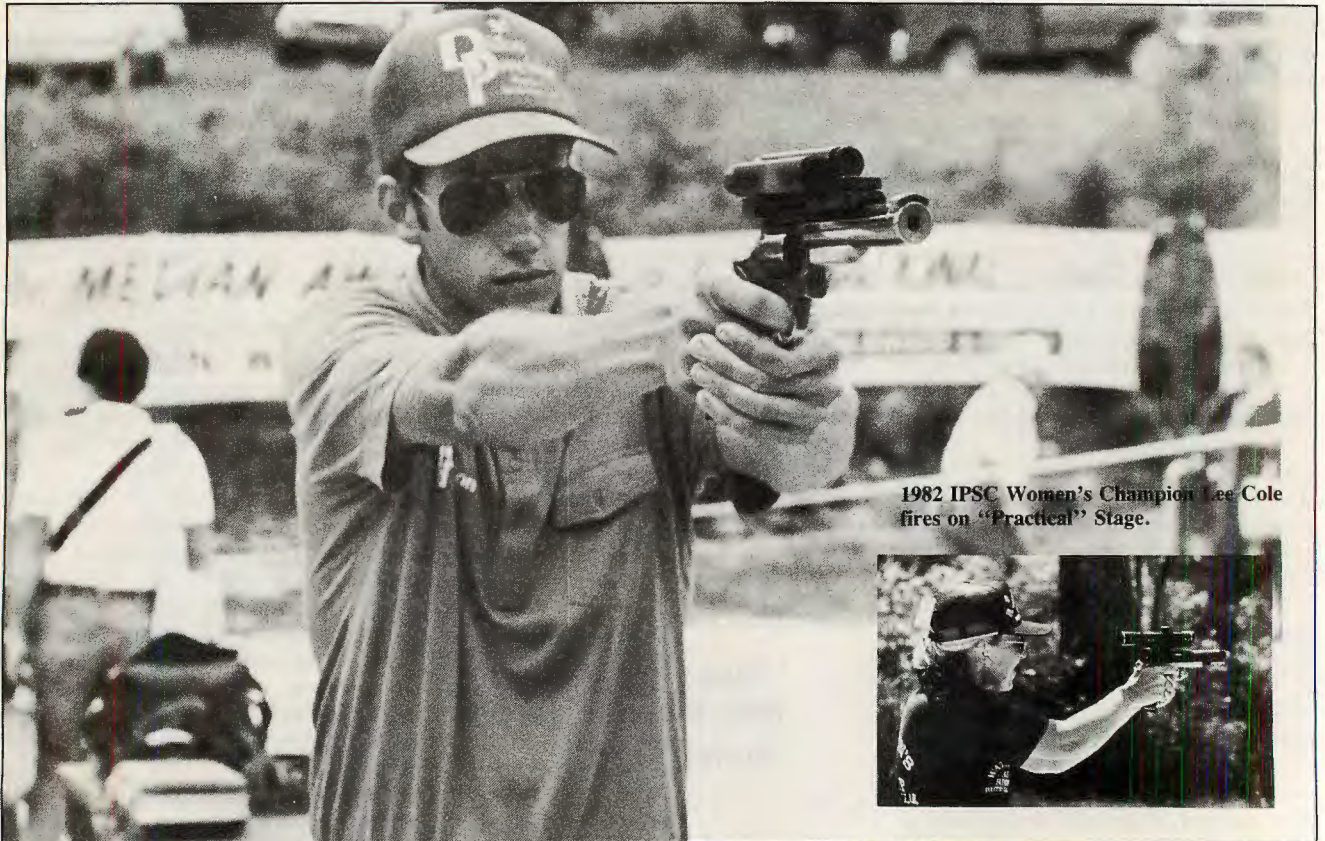
It was the fight of my life.

I salute those who fought there and fell there. They are my brothers. ✕

'83 BIANCHI CUP BLASTOFF

Brian Enos Outperforms Futuristic Field

Text & Photos by Jake Jatras



1982 IPSC Women's Champion Lee Cole fires on "Practical" Stage.

ARIZONA'S Brian Enos mercifully lowered his sights and fired his 506th round into the Missouri soil — after knocking down an astonishing 505 eight-inch circular steel plates to capture the 1983 Bianchi Cup.

Created to bring together top shooters and equalize the differences between the auto-dominated IPSC (International Practical Shooting Confederation) and wheelgunning PPC (Practical Police Combat), the Bianchi Cup was founded in 1979 by John Bianchi of Bianchi Gunleather. With a course designed by past IPSC World Champion Ray Chapman, the annual event saw 200 of the finest handgunners from all the major disciplines (NRA Bull's-Eye, IPSC and PPC) muster at the Chapman Academy Range in Columbia, Mo., 24-28 May 1983 to shoot for a share of \$160,000 in prize money —

1983 Bianchi Cup Champion Brian Enos of Mesa, Ariz., put on incredible shooting performance, with score of 1903/612 X-rings.

the richest tournament in the history of the sport.

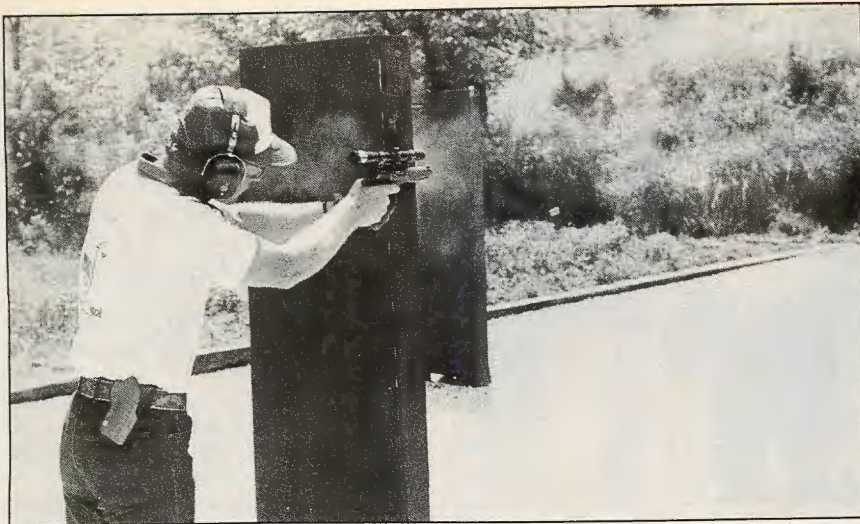
All strings of fire are six shots, with no reloading or movement. Each match is worth 480 points, but it is the X-ring count that really matters. Targets for three of the courses are modified IPSC buff cardboard silhouettes without heads (affectionately referred to as the R2D2 target).

Weapons are not restricted to action type, but must be 9mm or larger in caliber and ammunition must be loaded to at least equal the power of the standard .38 Special 158-grain lead bullet service round. Most of the

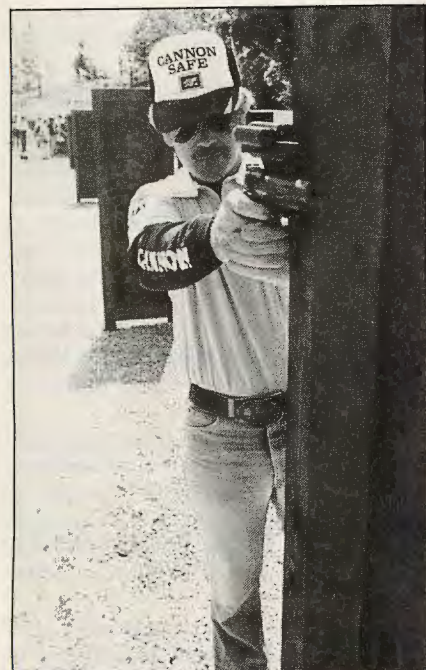
IPSC shooters stayed with their autos and the PPC group stayed in their camp with the revolvers. But due to the importance of having a high X-ring count, optical sights (Aimpoints, various power scopes, etc.) sprouted on many of the competitor's guns.

Match One — the *Aimpoint Practical Event* — is a variation of the popular IPSC "Advanced Military Modified" and involves shooting in fixed times at a duo of buff silhouettes at ranges from 10 to 50 yards. One stage also requires shooters to fire weak hand.

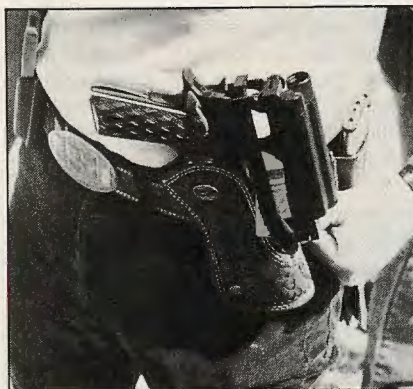
Caswell Equipment Company of St. Paul, Minn., provided the electronic timing gear. This advanced equipment really seemed to bring the competition right into the computer age. Sensors attached to the bottom of each target recorded the shock wave of the bullet passing through the



Ross Seyfried on Barricade Stage. Seyfried shot a 475 on the event.



Three-time Cup victor Mickey Fowler on Barricade Stage. Fowler slipped into eighth place this year.



Guns for Bianchi Cup have developed into highly specialized pieces of equipment. Mike Dalton's rig with Aimpoint weighs in at 59 ounces — empty!

target. Once the stop signal went off, a bullet passing through the target would be recorded on the sophisticated timer as an overtime shot.

Times in all the match stages seemed a bit liberal for the fast-paced IPSC pistoleros, but even they fell to the new timers. Last year's champ, Mickey Fowler, was assessed a late-shot penalty on day one. As the word passed among the entrants, late shots began to fall off, but many continued to question the machine's calls.

John Pride of the Los Angeles Police Department missed a perfect score of 480 by two points to take the demanding match. Rob Leatham from Arizona was close behind at 476 and Arkansas pistolsmith Bill Wilson was third with a 472.

Many of the pre-match favorites had some problems on this course. Three time champ Fowler turned in a 466; Enos shot 467 and '82 IPSC U.S. Title holder, Mike Plaxco, came in well back in the pack with a 414.

Match Two — the *Guns & Ammo* Barricade Event is modeled after the PPC barricade event, and has on its own become a specialized course of fire.

From the Honda Motocross gloves to the contorted grip stances, it was obvious that even down to an individual stage the nemesis of the average shooter — specialization — was making its presence felt. The only item not in use was a "C" clamp to attach the weapon to the barricade wall. The shooters blew the 10 ring right out of the targets.

Chip McCormick of Texas, South African Paul Liebenberg and Bill Gambill of North Carolina all shot a perfect 480, with McCormick occupying the top spot on an X-ring count of 38. Six others were two points off the pace at 478.

The Caswell timers should have used a rattler sound instead of an electronic overtime bleep, as they provided more than one shooter with a venomous 10-point bite (this is where Fowler got his OT call). With the centers being one ragged hole, it was also tough to count the number of hits on the target.

Match Three — *The Shooting Times* Moving Target Event — has in the past proven to be a back-breaker for some and a moment of glory for others. IPSC competitors should have a slight edge in this event due to the inclusion of "movers" in most major IPSC matches, but the PPC/Bull's-eye guys caught on fast. The mover crosses 60 feet in six seconds and the ranges vary from 10 to 25 yards. (At the 10-yard marker, each shooter fires six shots per run at the target; at 25 yards, three shots are fired per pass.)

The "lead" on the target is critical and varies with caliber and load. Eventual winner Enos had his timing down pat and scored an impressive 478 with 35 X-ring hits. North Carolinian Mark Duncan also had a 478, but was shy a few Xs. Third place went to Fowler with 476.

When Southern Californian Nick Pruitt gets around to designing a family crest, he

1983 BIANCHI CUP TOP FIFTY

NAME	SCORE/X-RINGS
1. Brian Enos	1903/612
2. John Pride	1902/407
3. Tom Campbell	1897/141
4. Bill Gambill	1890/158
5. Mark Duncan	1890/123
6. Rob Leatham	1886/142
7. Jerry Usher	1882/131
8. Mickey Fowler	1878/136
9. Mitchell McNeese	1876/217
10. Fred Romero	1876/109
11. Mike Dalton	1873/126
12. Bill Wilson	1872/131
13. Eddie Brown	1869/141
14. J.P. Nelson	1867/116
15. William Rogers	1858/129
16. Roger Burgess	1852/122
17. Ross Seyfried	1848/130
18. Royce Weddle	1842/123
19. Sam Yarosh	1840/117
20. Ricki Castelow	1835/120
21. Jason Cole	1834/112
22. Bob Gates	1832/107
23. Randy Rogers	1829/112
24. Michael Murray	1827/118
25. Louis Nardi	1824/119
26. David Smith	1822/130
27. Curtis Shipley	1822/103
28. Vance Schmid	1821/118
29. Paul Liebenberg	1821/118
30. Jim Zubiena	1821/115
31. Jack Magruder	1818/118
32. J.D. Herrman	1816/95
33. Ross Carter	1812/112
34. John Shaw	1807/118
35. Jerry Barrett	1804/98
36. Daniel McDonald	1803/108
37. Fred Wardell	1803/107
38. Craig Wood	1802/95
39. Buck Toddy	1802/90
40. Larry Raymond	1801/98
41. Mike Kanazawa	1799/111
42. Larry Todd	1796/105
43. Herman Umberger	1795/116
44. John G. Sayle	1793/109
45. James Duke	1788/101
46. Mike Fichman	1787/103
47. Edward B. Deacon	1784/110
48. Bill Mitchell	1783/101
49. James Clark	1782/106
50. James Swain	1778/104



Left to right: Ray Chapman, shoot-off champ Mike Dalton, Ross Seyfried and Colt's Dave Davies.

will probably not inscribe it with the motto "Better Late Than Never." At the shooter's meeting, match officials stressed that if a competitor were late for his relay, he would not be allowed to fire the stage. Pruitt was, and didn't. Score that a zero.

Match Four — the Heckler & Koch Falling Plate Event — is described in the organizer's press package as the "pressure

cooker" and it always has been. Last year, Mickey Fowler knew he had to "clean" the plates to win by one point and, in an unforgettable display of cool concentration, did what he had to do. Everyone anticipated another stressful match, as on the last day the top guns faced the steel heartbreakers.

A couple of years ago, Bianchi officials decided that if a competitor knocked down all 48 plates, he or she would continue shooting the eight-inch targets from 25 yards until a miss occurred to break ties. Just how many plates can a shooter down

before missing? We may never know, but for now (and I expect for some time) the record will stand at an amazing 505. Enos must use steel-seeking bullets.

John Pride scored an impressive 480/311 and Mitchell McNeece can be proud of his 480/129 score. After those two incredible scores, it was back to the real world of solid 480/74, 480/68, etc. But that 480/505...man! Brian Enos was shooting in another galaxy.

As the computer printed out the final results, the first name that appeared was Enos's with a score of 1903/612, followed by John Pride at 1902/407, Tom Campbell at 1897/141, Bill Gambill at 1890/158 and Mark Duncan at 1890/123. Some great shooting from the world's best.

One stage remained: The Colt Speed Event — the top 20 shooters in head-on-head, double-elimination competition. At stake was \$5,000 cash for first place and \$2,500 for second.

The targets are modified "Pepper Poppers" — ground-mounted steel plates that fall on impact. In this event, it soon became obvious that hot-shooting combatmaster Jerry Usher was the man to beat. In the final bout, fellow Californian Mike Dalton faced off with Usher for a dramatic conclusion to a great match. Usher gained an early advantage, but Dalton remained steady and at last prevailed. Upon the realization that he had taken the test of skill, Dalton leaped into the air as the crowd of spectators broke into cheers and applause.

The \$160,000 Bianchi pie gets cut up in some generous portions for the shooters. Brian Enos took home \$10,000 cash for first place, a trophy, \$1,000 cash for his stage victory at the Falling Plates and another \$1,000 for his first-place showing on the mover.

Second-place John Pride received \$7,000 cash for his overall score, plus \$1,000 for his win at the "Practical" stage. Third overall finisher Tom Campbell netted \$5,000. Bill Gambill, at fourth overall, won \$3,000 and fifth-place overall winner Mark Duncan received \$2,000.

Sturm, Ruger & Co. presented the top International Award and a \$1,000 check to Paul Liebenberg of South Africa. The top team was the L.A. Police Pistol Team consisting of J.P. Nelson, John Pride, Fred Romero and Chris Kaufmann, who received \$2,000 from Cannon Safes, plus gift certificates from Second Chance.

Top Lady Sarah Van Valzah got a nice check for \$1,000, sponsored by Charter Arms and *Combat Handguns* Magazine, plus a Charter Arms revolver. There were also the High Lawman Award (\$1,000), High Revolver Award (\$1,000), Median Award (\$1,000), top Heckler & Koch (\$1,000) and top Colt (\$1,500). (Colt donated \$18,000 to the match.)

Would you like to compete with the best? For details on how you can and an application, write: Bianchi Cup, 100 Calle Cortez, Temecula, CA 92390. Bianchi, Chapman & Co. will be on hand for next year's match. ✕

OH SAY CAN YOU SEE...

by Jake Jatras

Battery sales were brisk at this year's Bianchi Cup, but the sight black business hit an all-time low. Three years ago, a shooter using an Aimpoint or scope would have been scoffed at by the rest of the field, but this year it was a lonely feeling to show up with just your trusty iron sights.

Progress? Evolution? Words one might hear around the range, but certainly not from the competitors.

Matches are, of course, run by the organizers — in this case, Bianchi Gun-leather, the Chapman Academy and the NRA. The National Rifle Association after all is basing their Practical Pistol Program on the Bianchi Cup, and sanctions the contest.

This is the way it should be. But how do the competitors themselves influence the course of fire and the rules regarding the equipment to be used? Polling the top shooters one will discover that almost to a man they do not like the idea of allowing optical sights in the contest, but as one top gun stated, it would be like going to the Indy 500 and not turbo-charging your car.

John Bianchi and Ray Chapman have worked hard, and at great expense, in bringing together the top shooters from the major handgunning activities. A worthy goal indeed. The NRA, by sanctioning the Cup, has attempted to inject

into its at-times-stagnant pistol-shooting programs (look at the ISU) a bit of excitement, and to a degree they have succeeded. The Cup administrators have proven to be flexible in the past regarding rules. They didn't flinch at outlawing prone shooting and adding a man-versus-man shoot-off gave the contest a new dimension.

Why then the hesitation at keeping the match within some realistic boundaries of any definition of "practical?" The question is really simple: Do optical sights have a place in a "practical" pistol tournament? The answer is also simple: No!

Don't let anyone fool you by getting into a debate over what is "practical" and who is defining the term. Semantics aside, the Cup is a pistol tournament. The majority — and I mean majority — of competitors are drawn from PPC and IPSC. Neither discipline utilizes optics. If the goal of the contest was to bring the groups together, let both keep some common ground.

Sanctioning bodies and match administrators are responsible people. They should also be responsive to the participants. While I realize that competitors do not necessarily make the best policy setters, they are actively involved in the success of any program.

Shooters at this level of competition have some good ideas, and when it comes to optic sights, they make good sense.

IN DEFENSE OF THE DEFENDER



SOF's Hackathorn Tests Winchester's Latest Shotgun



ABOVE: Winchester's Defender: bargain blaster for police or private citizen. **LEFT:** Once and future riot guns: Winchester's M1917 Trench Gun and Model 1200 Defender.

Text & Photos by Ken Hackathorn



ABOVE: Shooter's hand slips from Defender forearm during cold, drizzly firing session.
LEFT: Troubled by double-aught and slugs, Defender's closer-range prints were perfect with No. 4 buck.
BELOW: Business-like appearance and business-like price recommend the new Winchester Defender.



DEFENDER

WHILE the Tommygun was advertised as the "Trench Broom" at the end of WWI, the blaster that swept the Western Front's muddy ditches was the shotgun: the Winchester 97, to be precise. Winchester has had its ups and downs since, but the Defender may put it back in the scattergun business.

The Defender isn't pretty. Its furniture is almost shabby, but it works as well as prettier and more expensive guns. The Defender returns Winchester's old reputation as a combat shotgun maker.

From the Philippine Insurrection to WWII, American fighting men loved the Model 1897. Dressed up with a bayonet adapter, the '97 became the ubiquitous Trench Gun, Model 1917. In one form or another — usually with the Marine's beloved brass-cased ammo — the Model 1897 was used all over the world during the first half of the 20th century.

The Model 12 maintained both the tradition of durable excellence and big sales of the '97. This legendary 12-bore saw service with both armed services and the police. Sportsmen shot the 12 on every continent.

But it was the grandson of the '97 that ruined Winchester's name in shotguns. The 1200 was known for poor accuracy, poor finish and rough action. It ruined a decades-long reputation for Winchester, and contributed to the company's collapse.

Made by a different firm — U.S. Repeating Arms — but working from the old Winchester designs and patents, the Winchester trademark will again be seen on working combat shotguns. The Defender is not the world's best fighting shotgun, but it's better than anything else in its price class.

The Defender is 39 inches long, barely tips the scales at 7.25 pounds, and fires 2.75-inch or three-inch magnum 12-gauge ammunition. Seven rounds of 2.75-inch or five rounds of three-inch shells fit in the full-barrel-length tubular magazine. The barrel is 18 inches long with a mil-spec cylinder bore. And its suggested retail price is \$249.50.

Winchester's newest riot gun is plain. There's nothing to inflate its bargain price. Steel parts are all blued and polished, and the alloy receiver is anodized black. Wooden furniture on the Defender is birch or beech with a walnut stain and the butt is fitted with a thick black-rubber recoil pad. A special stainless model is also available with all steel parts in stainless steel, and the alloy receiver refinished in a brushed chrome plate.

Since both sporting and combat practice usually assume the shotgun is a weapon pointed rather than aimed, the stock Defender is shipped with a plain silver bead front sight. For those who have begun to use the riot gun with slug sights, it can also be ordered with a blade-and-leaf front-and-rear sight package.

When alloy receivers, stamped steel parts and plastic furniture were introduced, the traditionalists went wild, and everybody worried whether the new material would take punishment. With adjustments required by time and use, the new, cheaper materials and manufacturing techniques have withstood the test. The Defender takes advantage of all this to keep price low without impairing reliability. Many interior steel parts are stamped — Winchester had one of the first successful alloy shotgun receivers (on the otherwise despised 1200) — and the trigger housing is a dense, tough nylon.

Light weight and good human engineering make the Defender handle fast. Although this quickness translates into slower recovery in rapid aimed fire, its first shot comes off as fast as any scattergun's. Although this may seem unimportant to those who don't carry these things for a living, cops appreciate the light weight for long carries. A heavy, solid gun gives more pleasant shooting, but you're more likely to carry the lighter one.

Test prints were shot at 10, 15 and 25 meters. Slugs patterned a foot high and nearly eight inches to the right at 25 meters. Double-aught buck printed high and to the right, but not so far off as the rifled slugs. The only thing that shot close to the mark was No. 4 buckshot.

Qualitatively, shooting the Defender is most everything one would like about a light 12-gauge shotgun. It's fast-handling, and the well-known Winchester double-rail slide never even suggested binding. As I said before, it bounces around when fired rapidly, but perceived recoil is lighter than it ought to be for a gun this weight.

The only thing wrong with the Defender is the shape of its forearm. Uncomfortable under good conditions, the hand must be repositioned for nearly every shot if it's cold and damp. There have been a number of these complaints from competitive combat shooters who use the Defender.

Though the Defender is pleasant to shoot beyond its price, U.S. Repeating Arms is missing a large number of sales by omitting a military-style, oiled-stock, non-reflective-finish gun from its line. This is business dress for most serious shotguns, and the condominium commandos like the style, too.

Guns are up and buying power is still down, so the time may be right for the Defender. ☒

SOF TESTS RPK-74

COYNE and I are in the red jeep again, racing back to Darra Adam Khel. This time it's for the RPK-74, Russia's new SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon). We roll to a stop at the Pakistan Army checkpoint. Our mujahid driver climbs out and after much discussion comes back with an old man I assume to be a vagrant. They both get in and we proceed beyond the checkpoint. The mujahid refuses to speak and we ride in dead silence.

A hundred meters past the checkpoint the jeep halts, the old man is handed a 100 Rupee note and he departs. Momentarily, I conclude he was a beggar. But I have just been witness to *baksheesh* (bribery). The decrepit, disheveled-looking graybeard was a Pakistani Political Officer.

We arrive in Darra without further incident and park outside the shop of gun dealer Hakim Gaz. Once again, he has the goods. The RPK-74 is well-worn. It has seen much fighting, but is more than serviceable.

Led by Gaz's brother, we tramp down the street, carrying the RPK-74 and several thousand rounds of ammunition, to a vacant lot in the very center of town. While Coyne is setting up his video equipment, I begin blazing away at a bedrock outcropping about 200 meters downrange from the rock berm I have rested the bipod on.

Apparently the continuous, sustained bursts of fire are too much for even Darra's jaded ears and soon every street urchin in the village is in audience. As expected, the RPK-74 spits its empties to the right and front by as much as 40 feet. A decided defect with regard to position disclosure, but worse, between each burst the children scramble over the berm and race out in front of the muzzle to retrieve the expended cases. Even 30 minutes of this is too much and we decide to move.

We set up again in a meadow on the other side of the village, to the rear of the buildings. Firing into a hill, I suddenly notice an Afghan hat rising over the crest, directly above the front sight. A face appears. It is attached to the body of a villager who saunters into my line of fire, pulling up his pants,

as he has just finished relieving himself behind the hill. Somewhat disconcerted, I pass the weapon to Jim Coyne, SOF's foreign correspondent, so I can photograph him — as he fires, cattle begin to migrate across the meadow into the firing zone.

We pack up and relocate once more — this time well outside Darra in a dry wash, where I am able to complete my test and evaluation without further disturbance.

The RPK-74 and AK-74 family of weapons are logical and quite correct extensions of the Kalashnikov system. They are essentially AKMs chambered for the new 5.45x39mm ComBloc cartridge.

The RPK-74 receiver is a one-millimeter-thick U-section of stamped sheet metal extensively supported by pins and rivets. The rails on which the bolt rides are stamped and spot-welded to the inside of the receiver. Unlike the AKM and AK-74 rifles, the RPK-74's sheet-metal receiver cover is not ribbed.

All Kalashnikov's are gas-operated, without an adjustable gas regulator. The RPK-74 operates as follows. After ignition of the primer and propellant, the resulting gases are diverted into the gas cylinder on top of the barrel. The piston (hard-chromed for easier cleaning) is driven rearward and the bolt carrier, attached to the piston extension, passes through the necessary amount of free play travel until the gas pressure drops to a safe level. A cam slot milled into the bolt carrier engages the bolt's cam stud and rotates the bolt about 35 degrees to unlock it from the receiver.

Since no primary extraction takes place, a large extractor claw is required — and that of the RPK-74 is really massive. As the bolt travels back, it rolls the hammer over and also compresses the recoil spring. The bolt ceases all rearward travel by slamming into the rear end of the receiver. The recoil spring then drives the bolt forward, another round is stripped from the magazine, chambered and the bolt comes to rest.

The bolt carrier continues onward for about 5.5mm after the two-lugged rotary bolt has locked. This alone is not sufficient to

prevent carrier bounce from unlocking the bolt when the carrier hits the receiver stop as the RPK-74's light, sheet-metal receiver accelerates the bolt carrier's bounce.

The possibility of the weapon firing out of battery is thus not totally eliminated, even though it is only during this last forward movement of the bolt carrier that the secondary — or safety — sear is released and control of the hammer's rotation goes back to the primary — or trigger — sear. It was therefore necessary to incorporate a complex five-component final fail-safe (often erroneously referred to as a "rate reducer") which delays hammer drop until the complete cessation of all bolt carrier bounce.

As with all Kalashnikovs, the RPK-74's hammer and trigger spring is made of three-strand cable. The RPK-74 trigger and firing mechanism are borrowed directly from the U.S. M1 Garand rifle.

The RPK-74 selector lever is the same stamped, sheet-metal bar on the right side of the receiver found on all Kalashnikovs. On the specimen I tested it was easier to manipulate than most, but still quite noisy. The top position is safe. The trigger is locked and the bolt cannot be retracted while the lever is in this position.

The center position, marked "AB," is for full-auto as the spring-loaded safety sear is depressed and deactivated entirely from control on the hammer. The lower position, marked "OA," is for semiautomatic fire and it places no pressure on the safety sear, which is free to catch the hammer. In the "OA" position, when the trigger is released, control of the hammer is restored to the primary sear and pulling the trigger will fire another round.

The RPK-74 buttstock is fabricated from laminated wood. Its configuration is derived from the RPD light machine gun. It is not of the folding variety, as some have mistakenly reported. The upper and lower handguards are made of the same laminated wood. The pistol grip, made of brown plastic, is exactly like that of the AKM.

The RPK-74 rearsight is a tangent type with an open U-shaped notch. Targets can be engaged quickly, but not as precisely as with the U.S.-preferred aperture rear sights. It is adjustable for elevation only out to 1,000 meters.

The front sight is a threaded post, adjust-

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

Russia's New SAW Has Flaws



ABOVE: Forward-mounted bipod is more stable than needed by a 12-pound micro-caliber SAW. **RIGHT:** At 12 pounds fatigue sets in before recoil hurts with new Sov micro-caliber SAW fired from shoulder. **BELOW:** SOF Foreign Correspondent Jim Coyne shows RPK's "third leg" as 40-round mag drags during prone firing test.



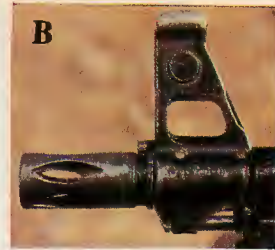
RPK-74 SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 5.45 x 39mm
MUZZLE VELOCITY: 2,950 fps
WEIGHT, empty: Approximately 12 pounds with bipod
BARREL: Length 24.25 inches; chamber and bore chrome-plated; four-groove, right-hand twist, 1 turn in 5.8 inches
FEED: 40-round plastic magazine, will also accept 30-round AK-74 rifle magazine
SIGHTS: Front — adjustable post; Rear — tangent, U-notch, elevation to 1,000 meters
OPERATION: Gas, no regulator, selective-fire
CYCLIC RATE: 600-650 rpm
METHOD OF LOCKING: Two-lug rotary bolt
MANUFACTURER: Unidentified Soviet arsenals



A: Field-stripped RPK-74 — quick to disassemble and easy to maintain and clean. **D:** Familiar Russian SAW buttstock offers large, comfortable butt-plate and extra hand-hold for superior control.

E: RPK-74 tubular sheet-metal bipod's forward position offers fire control, but restricts lateral movement.

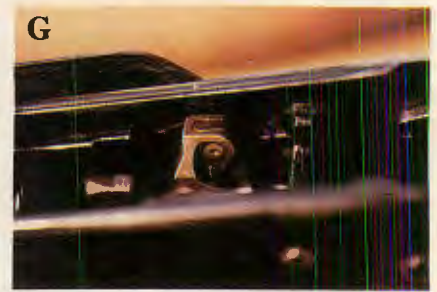


B: RPK-74 muzzle brake is almost exact duplicate of M16 muzzle device. **C:** RPK-74 gas system. The upper and lower handguards are made of laminated wood.



F: Receiver with selector lever in safe position. "AB" is full-auto and "OA" is semiautomatic fire.

I: Tangent rear sight with open notch adjustable for elevation out to 1,000 meters. **H:** Forty-round RPK-74 glass-reinforced plastic magazine.



G: Interior of RPK-74 receiver showing so-called "rate reducer" in center. **J:** Receiver markings indicate year of manufacture (1978), unknown Soviet arsenal code (KA) and serial number (7182).



SOF TESTS RPK-74

able for elevation zero with the Kalashnikov combination tool. Windage can be adjusted only by sliding the front sight in its dovetail.

Our specimen was marked with the standard Russian star and "1978KA-7182," indicating the year of manufacture, arsenal and serial number. It was finished with a high-gloss black enamel that had been subjected to considerable wear. The web sling was of the spring-hook variety common to Soviet small arms.

The RPK-74 has no bayonet stud. Bayonets on squad automatics were last seen on the Japanese light machine guns of WWII. A cleaning rod is held under the barrel.

The RPK-74 magazine is a curved, staggered box holding 40 rounds and identical in construction to late AKM and early AK-74 magazines. It is fabricated from a glass-reinforced, rust-colored, polyethylene plastic. Molded in two parts, the magazine body is assembled using a viscous, two-part epoxy-resin adhesive. These magazines are noted for their great strength and durability. The 30-round AK-74 magazine can also be used.

Although robust, these magazines are bulky. The RPK-74 40-round magazine is only .75-inch shorter than the 50-round Galil magazine and a full 1.5 inches longer than the 40-round HK magazine. This magnifies a problem common to all bottom-fed, bipod-mounted machine guns. When fired from the prone position, the weapon will frequently high-center on the magazine, lift off the bipod and become instable.

All of the RPK-74 magazines I examined exhibited severe floorplate scarring, indicating this is a constant problem. Obstruction of movement by the magazine is worse if the operator is lying with his head downhill. (Insertion of 30-round magazines into heavy-barreled, bipod-mounted FN FALs will cause the same difficulty — and for the same reason, a larger-capacity magazine was never developed for the BAR.) It can be expected that a large-capacity drum magazine, similar to the 75-round unit developed for the 7.62x39mm RPK, will eventually be fielded by the Soviets.

The most proper solution is that seen in the U.S. M249 SAW (see "Now See The SAW, SOF, August '82), which feeds the M16 30-round box magazine from the left side. In addition, the M249 has the capacity for effective sustained fire by use of disintegrating link belts. In the Soviet Army, however, the sustained-fire role is usually taken up by the PK family of machine guns. Chambered in caliber 7.62x54mm Russian Rimmed, they can effectively engage targets out to 1,000 meters.

The RK-74 bipod has tubular legs constructed of sheet-metal and appears to be identical to the bipod used with the

7.62x39mm RPK. Mounted just to the rear of the front sight, it offers the maximum possible fire control (when not neutralized by the magazine) and assists in producing the smallest possible burst groups. However, lateral movement is restricted at this position and it is difficult to engage flanking targets quickly.

The M249's bipod is located to the rear of the gas regulator, close to the pistol grip. At this position, the arc of lateral movement is satisfactory for flanking coverage and the engagement of rapidly moving frontal targets, while still giving enough stability for high hit probability.

Overall length of the RPK-74 is 41.75 inches. The barrel is 24.25 inches long. The barrel has four grooves, a right-hand twist and a chrome-lined bore. The weight, empty, is approximately 12 pounds; this is several pounds lighter than either the Soviet RPD or the U.S. M249.

Still, it is about four pounds heavier than the AK-74 rifle (see "Soviet AKS-74," SOF, May '83). This alone is sufficient to allow substitution of the elaborate, but effective, muzzle brake found on the AK-74 with an almost exact duplicate of the M16 "bird-cage" flash suppressor.

I have described in detail the 5.45x29mm cartridge elsewhere (SOF, May '83, p. 46): There is nothing magical about it whatever. It barely approximates the performance level of our Vietnam-era M193 ball ammunition. Furthermore, it is an entire generation behind the new M855 5.56mm ball cartridge which uses the 62-grain Belgian SS109 bullet.

We fired several thousand rounds through the RPK-74, in the prone, kneeling and standing positions, and from the hip assault position using the issue sling. With its 12-pound heft, firing from the standing position, even with a sling, is only for emergencies.

Designing for combat, not the target range, the Soviets have graced the RPK-74 with the usual Kalashnikov trigger pull: a long, very creepy single stage with a surprise let-off. However, experienced operators will have no trouble attaining two-shot bursts. Jim Coyne, a former helicopter M60D gunner in Vietnam, was rather consistently able to tick off one round at a time with the selector lever on "AB" (full-auto). The cyclic rate appeared to me to be in the range of 600 to 650 rpm.

Accuracy and hit probability, especially off the bipod in the prone position, are quite high. Two- and three-shot burst groups at 200 meters were all well within 12 inches. No stoppages of any kind were experienced during the entire test sequence.

The RPK-74 butt, like that of the RPD, is long and large, dissipating the recoil impulse during burst firing. Its shape also pro-

vides a rearward handhold to further stabilize the weapon in sustained fire.

The RPK-74's propensity to throw whatever lubricant has been applied back into the shooter's face during the operating cycle is irritating.

The lack of a hold-open will also annoy some, but its presence would expose the action to more debris, an important consideration in sandy and dusty environments. Kalashnikov magazines must be inserted by a "rolling" movement, a procedure made more difficult with the RPK-74 if the 40-round magazine hits the ground during prone fire.

Far more serious is the absence of a quick-change barrel. After just two magazines (80 rounds), the barrel overheated and the handguards became uncomfortable to grasp. The U.S. M249 SAW features a three-second quick-change barrel. While the sustained-fire potential of a weapon is of small consequence to the mujahideen — who do not have access to large quantities of ammunition and employ hit-and-run tactics — this omission must seem a serious defect to the Russian infantry units for whom the weapon was designed.

Squad automatic weapons should also feature adjustable gas regulators, since more intense and sustained fire will foul the gas system rapidly. The M249 has a hand-adjustable, two-position rotary gas regulator.

The RPK-74 and AK-74 have by now been widely issued among Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Their numerous small deficiencies aside, they remain reliable and easy to maintain, hallmark features of Soviet military small arms. The basic Kalashnikov design has been in the field for more than 30 years. It has proven its worth under all types of adverse conditions. Although the RPK-74 comes in second in the race with the M249, it will still do the job.

Having fought as warriors for thousands of years, the proud, ferocious Afghan Freedom Fighters feel no need to prove their masculinity and will take all the Kalashnikovs in this new "pipsqueak" caliber they can get their hands on — although they still retain the trustworthy .303 Lee-Enfield for long-range sniping.

My final encounter with the RPK-74 occurred several weeks later on the final trip out of Darra Adam Khel. The mujahideen had worked a trade on the very RPK-74 I tested, involving a PKM machine gun, for which 7.62x54mm Russian Rimmed ammunition was difficult to obtain. We would bring it back to Peshawar ourselves.

As we approached the Pakistani Army checkpoint, my thoughts alternated between visions of long years in a stinking Paki prison and going down in flames and glory should they search us. We stopped behind a garishly painted bus, 30 feet in back of the checkpoint. As we started up, my hand edged closer to the RPK-74. But we sailed across with the bus, saving me and the RPK-74 from the ultimate test and evaluation. ☒

Red Star Over Central America

PAX CUBANA

by Jay Mallin

Nicaraguan Sandinistas are supplied and trained by Cuban communists, who are using Nicaragua as a launching base from which to spread Marxist subversion to other Central American countries. The fall of Nicaragua to the communist Sandinistas was Fidel Castro's first success in his gameplan. Photo: J.L. Atlan/Syigma

EARLY in 1959, right after Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba, Nicaraguan exiles were given military training in Cuba; in May '59, Cuban Air Force plane 508 flew weapons to Nicaraguan communists.

Some 20 years later, in the summer of 1979, Castro declared, "Within 10 years all of Central America will be under the control of revolutionaries."

Today, at the midway point in that prediction, what may have seemed like a mere boast has become a grave danger. One Central American country — Nicaragua — is already controlled by "revolutionaries" allied with Castro and four of the six others — El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica — are under attack. That leaves just Belize, formerly British Honduras, and Panama unthreatened in the Central American isthmus.

Belize, which President Reagan recently referred to as a "model of peace and stability in an area wracked by political turmoil," gained independence from Britain in 1981, but retains British SAS troops, primarily there to prevent Guatemala from trying to enforce its claim to sovereignty by armed force. This British military presence, enhanced by the Falklands lesson, and Belize's topography and humid, hurricane-prone climate, which isolate and keep it economically undeveloped, account for Castro's inattention to this small country.

Panama, on the other hand, is a different story. Here, American interests and military presence have staved off external political subversion — at least until recently. For more information about Panama, see "Problems in Panama," on p. 82.

Hardly had Castro taken over in Cuba when he set in motion a campaign to extend

Cuban influence and hegemony in various parts of the world. Beginning with a sea-borne expedition against Panama in April 1959, and right through the clandestine shipment of weapons to guerrillas in Central America in the '80s, Castro has never ceased in his efforts to export the Cuban revolution to the rest of Central America.

The first attempts at subversion were crude. Exiles from a number of countries flooded into Cuba in 1959 and many were given training. Then expeditions were organized and dispatched against other nations.



Sandinista stands guard with AK-47 at Nicaraguan-Honduran border in Nueva Segovia Province, where frequent clashes between Contras and Sandinistas have occurred. Photo: J.L. Atlan/Syigma

These inept filibustering attempts were quickly wrapped up by national defense forces. Cuba turned to more sophisticated methods of subversion, including the use of propaganda and financial support to assist individuals and groups sympathetic to *Fidelismo*. Cuba also continued to provide training for revolutionary exiles; as many as 1,500 were brought to the island annually for that purpose in the early '60s.

Castro's agents operated throughout Latin America, but they were not confined to even that huge area. They also supported leftist groups in Africa and were in touch with subversive groups in Canada and the United States. Castro's ambitions — and the work of his agents — had few geographical limitations.

It was not until July 1979, however, that Castro finally scored a major victory. Anastasio Somoza, long one of Castro's prime targets, was overthrown as dictator of Nicaragua after a bloody civil conflict. Many different groups of Nicaraguans fought against Somoza, but the leadership and military strength were provided by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which had been supported by Cuba since the '60s.

In 1977, Castro decided to concentrate his Central American efforts in Nicaragua, to fell the first domino. Opposition to Somoza was growing, and it was fueled further by the 1978 killing of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, a newspaper publisher and outspoken opponent of Somoza. (It is an interesting coincidence that in communist-directed insurrections, prominent anti-government figures are murdered — and governments get the blame.)

FSLN was split into three major factions





Sandinista troops patrol wooded area southeast of Jalapa, Nicaragua, in an attempt to stop Contra raids from Honduran-based camps. Photo: J.L. Atlan/Sygma

at the time, but Armando Ulises Estrada Fernandez, a high-ranking official of Cuba's America Department, began meeting secretly outside Cuba with faction leaders. Although Cuba had a "traditional" intelligence service, the *Direccion General de Inteligencia* (DGI), the *Departamento America* was set up in 1974 as a separate intelligence organization with the specific responsibility of conducting subversion in the Western Hemisphere.

Ulises Estrada told FSLN leaders that Cuban assistance would be forthcoming if the factions united. The Cuban agent's efforts were successful: In July 1978, Cuba announced the unification of Nicaraguan rebel groups and asked leftist movements in other Latin American countries to support the FSLN.

Ulises Estrada then put together a network for channeling weapons and other supplies to Nicaraguan guerrillas. In preparation for a rebel offensive in late 1978, weapons were flown from Cuba to Panama, and then sent on smaller aircraft to Costa Rica, where they were distributed to Nicaraguan guerrillas based in northern Costa Rica. To oversee the flow of arms, the America Department installed a secret op-

erations center in San Jose, Costa Rica's capital. It was headed by Julian Lopez Diaz, and one of his assistants was Andres Barahona. After the Sandinistan victory, Lopez Diaz became Cuban ambassador to Nicaragua and Barahona set up a new Nicaraguan security/intelligence service, which he now heads *de facto*, although not in title. These two men play key roles in the Cuban/Nicaraguan drive against other Central American countries.

During the Nicaraguan civil war, Cuban-trained FSLN members continued to return to Nicaragua via Panama. In addition, Cuba's Department of Special Operations (similar to U.S. Special Forces) dispatched personnel to northern Costa Rica to train and advise the Nicaraguan guerrillas operating from there. These military advisers accompanied the Nicaraguans on operations inside Nicaragua. Some were wounded and were evacuated back to Cuba via Panama. Not only did Cuba provide weapons, training and advice for the guerrillas, it also helped organize, equip and transport an "internationalist brigade" to fight alongside the rebels. Its members came from left-extremist Latin American groups.

The toppling of Somoza provided Cuba

with a friendly allied country in Central America. The Sandinistas quickly asserted their dominance over the revolution-spawned rebel political alliance. Now Cuba had a vitally important base — an entire country — from which it could conduct operations throughout the area.

The Cuban/Sandinistan victory in Nicaragua, beyond its regional ramifications, has had broad strategic repercussions which directly and significantly concern the United States. What had happened in Nicaragua was not lost on the Kremlin. For two decades, Cuba had been a handy satellite for the Soviet Union, a thorn in the United States' underside, a place which could generate continuous mischief in the Western Hemisphere's democratic countries.

Since Nikita Khrushchev's abortive effort to install ICBMs in Cuba in 1962, however, Cuba had not played an important role in Soviet strategic planning. It served as a good place to send Russian warships and aircraft on long-range training exercises, and as a base, it was conveniently close to the States, for the monitoring of American electronic communications, including military transmissions.

But, the Kremlin noted, Castro had done

what he had been trying to do for 20 years: He had virtually taken over another country, a country in a region considered to be completely under American influence.

The Kremlin saw Cuba in a new light. In 1981, a massive arms buildup began on the island. Ship after Russian ship pulled into Mariel harbor and unloaded huge crates. The crates contained machine guns, ammunition, assault rifles, shoulder-fired antitank and anti-aircraft rockets, tanks, military trucks, SA-6 ground-to-air missile launchers and associated radar, and disassembled MiG-27 fighter-bombers. The Russians also provided Cuba with a Koni-class frigate (2,000-mile range) and about a dozen Mi-24 Hind-D helicopters, heavily armed gunships that can each transport eight to 10 fully armed troops.

In a report to Congress in 1983, U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger stated: "Castro's Cuba has abandoned the attempt to become a model of progress and has become one more instrument of Soviet imperialism, as well as a direct military threat to the region. It serves as an arms depot, a supplier of expeditionary forces for Soviet arms and a logistics base for Soviet-supported intervention in Central America and elsewhere."

Weinberger reported: "During 1981, Cuba received 63,000 metric tons of arms — the highest yearly total since the massive buildup in 1962, the year of the missile crisis." The buildup continued at about the same pace throughout 1982.

Two decisions had been made by Moscow and Havana:



1. To strengthen Cuba militarily, upgrading its strategic importance and making it a country more difficult for the United States to conquer, should there ever be a military showdown.

2. To launch an all-out drive against Central America, sparing none of the remaining non-communist countries.

Country by country, this is what the Cubans did and are doing:

El Salvador — Social and economic inequities in El Salvador seemed to hold particular promise for a *Fidelista*-supported insurgency. Prior to 1979 Cuban assistance to Salvadoran leftists consisted mainly of providing a little financial assistance and training small numbers of guerrillas. As had been the case in Nicaragua, the Salvadoran left was fragmented. Cuba set about uniting

the factions, and the various elements were told that increased Cuban assistance was dependent on unification. In December 1979, a meeting was held in Havana that resulted in an agreement on unity by three significant Salvadoran guerrilla groups: the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN), the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), and the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCES), which had established its own armed branch. In May 1980, the Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP) joined the guerrilla coalition. The coalition called itself the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU).

The unification process was in the hands of the America Department, which, even while it was doing this, was also developing a clandestine network through which weapons could be funneled to the guerrillas. Part of this network consisted of the same mechanisms and channels that had been utilized during the Nicaraguan conflict. Arms from Cuba would go to Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and then would be sent by sea, or secretly overland through Honduras, to the rebels in El Salvador. The weapons did not come from Cuba's own stocks — such arms would be traceable and blame could be placed on Castro. Rather, Cuba coordinated the acquisition of weapons from Vietnam (which had an amplitude of captured U.S. weapons), Ethiopia and Eastern Europe. Honduras stepped up measures to prevent the flow of weapons through its territory. Today, therefore, most of the traffic to El Salvador is from Nicaragua in small aircraft and small boats in the Gulf of Fonseca, whose waters lap onto the shores of Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador.

The number of Salvadoran guerrillas trained in Cuba increased considerably in 1980. A typical three-month training program included courses in guerrilla tactics, weapons use and marksmanship, demolition, field engineering, construction of fortified positions, land navigation, and the use of mines and artillery. Reportedly, groups up to battalion size (250 to 500 men) re-

Sandinista militia members in village of El Jicano sing and play guitar to keep up their spirits during April '83 Contra raids. Photo: J.L. Atlan/Sygma



ceived instruction, indicating that the Cubans were training integral units.

The Cubans assisted the guerrillas in formulating their military strategy, and evidently influenced them to launch their unsuccessful offensive of January 1981. When this failed, guerrilla leaders traveled to Havana to work out future strategies. Today, the rebels are conducting an insurgency similar to that of Cuba in 1956-58: maintenance of sizable guerrilla groups in the field, coupled with terrorism in urban areas and attacks on the country's economic system by blowing up bridges, destroying power lines and similar tactics.

Guatemala — Guatemala has been a target of the Castro regime since its early days. This may have been due to the fact that the late Ernesto "Che" Guevara, former mastermind and director of Cuba's subversive program, had been a minor official in Guatemala when a leftist government was in power (it was overthrown in 1954). Guevara probably maintained a personal interest in Guatemala. A Guatemalan friend of his, Julio Roberto Caceres Valle, who became an official of the Castro government, returned to Guatemala to fight and was killed while with guerrillas in the early '60s.

As in Nicaragua and El Salvador, Cuba made its aid to Guatemalan guerrillas conditional to their unification. Talks aimed at



Sandinista reserves, who reinforced Nicaraguan militia in Las Uvas and Las Mercedes hills, five kilometers southeast of Jalapa, train near Jalapa with U.S. M29A1 81mm M29A1 mortar. Some of the reservists are as young as 13. Photo: J.L. Atlan/Sygm

this were held in Guatemala in 1980 by leaders of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), the Organization of People in Arms (ORPA) and a dissident faction of the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT/D). Nicaragua could now play a surrogate role for Cuba, and the Guatemalan guerrilla leaders were

invited to Managua to continue their discussions. Unity was achieved and an agreement was signed in Managua in November 1980 which established the National Revolutionary Union (URN). Present at the signing ceremony were the chief of the American Department, Manuel Pineiro Losada, and the head of its Central American section,

CASTRO'S MILITARY MIGHT

by Jay Mallin

Fidel Castro Ruz is commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) of Cuba. Actual command is in the hands of his brother, General of the Army Raul Castro Ruz, who is Minister of the FAR (as well as being number-two man in the government and Communist Party). With Soviet assistance, Raul Castro built Cuba's military establishment from a small guerrilla army into the most powerful military force in Latin America.

Cuba has an army of more than 225,000 men, a navy of about 11,000 and air defense forces of 16,000. In May 1981, a territorial militia was set up. To date some half million men and women have been incorporated into it, and the eventual goal is 1,000,000 persons. The regular army is divided regionally into the Eastern, Central and Western Armies, each commanded by a division general. The army includes nine active and 18 reserve divisions. (Of approximately 190,000 reservists, about 60,000 are on active duty at any given time and have been included in the 225,000 figure.)

The army is equipped with approximately 650 tanks, including IS-2 heavy tanks, T-34, T-54/55 medium tanks, and PT-76 light tanks. The army has some 120 helicopters, including *Hind* attack craft. It also has BRDM-1 armored cars, BMP mechanized infantry vehicles and BTR armored personnel carriers. Weaponry includes M-116 pack howitzers, 76, 85, 122, 130 and 152mm guns, SU-100 self-propelled guns, *Frog-4* surface-to-surface and SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles, 57mm recoilless launchers, *Sagger* and *Snapper* antitank guided weapons and ZU-23 towed and ZSU-23-4 self-propelled antiaircraft guns.

The air force has some 250 MiG fighter aircraft, including two and possibly three MiG-23 *Flogger* planes which may be able to carry nuclear weapons. Cuba has some 20 AN-26 transport planes with a range that would enable them to fly to Central America (say, to drop paratroops) and return without refueling.

Cuba's air-ferrying capability has been bolstered further by aircraft acquired by its commercial air fleet. Since 1975, this fleet has added seven IL-62 long-range jet transport aircraft and a number of TU-154 medium-to-long-range transport planes. Each of these aircraft can carry 150 to 200 combat-equipped troops.

The air defense force is equipped with SA-2/3 and SA-6 surface-to-air missiles.

The navy is equipped with *Samlet* coast-defense missiles, mine-sweepers, landing craft, coast-patrol vessels and about 50 torpedo and missile attack boats. With Soviet assistance, Cuba is acquiring a blue-water navy: Since 1978 a *Koni* frigate and two *Foxtrot* attack submarines have been added (a third submarine is used for training).

The Cuban warships and aircraft are a threat to the United States' vital sea lanes in the Gulf of Mexico. They also provide Castro with a capability to conduct air-sea military operations in Central America and anywhere in the Caribbean. Years ago Castro stated, "The Caribbean is ours."

For two years now the Soviet Union has been pouring armaments into Cuba. Some 66,000 metric tons of military equipment entered Cuba in 1981, the greatest amount since 1962, when the Russians attempted to emplace ICBMs in Cuba. Approximately the same amount of equipment was sent in 1982. The military hardware is estimated to have cost Moscow one billion dollars.

Cuba's activities are not limited to the Caribbean/Central American area. Although a relatively small country

Ramiro Jesus Abreu Quintana.

With accord reached, Cuba stepped up the sending of weapons and the training of Guatemalan guerrillas. Most of the weapons have traveled overland clandestinely from Nicaragua through Honduras. Lately, however, due to increased Honduran vigilance, arms are flown into Guatemala in small planes. Some weapons have come from El Salvador. In June 1981, Paulino Castillo, a captured guerrilla, related to newspapermen that he was part of a 23-man group of Guatemalans that had undergone seven months of training in Cuba.

Castillo had traveled to Costa Rica from Guatemala by bus, been provided with a Panamanian passport so he could enter Panama, and in Panama had been given a Cuban passport so he could continue to Cuba. There he received training and then returned via Nicaragua to the guerrillas in Guatemala, where he later surrendered to an army patrol. A large percentage of the 2,000 or more guerrillas in Guatemala are believed to have been trained in Cuba, transported to and from the island through the extensive network set up by the America Department.

Honduras — Here also Cuba has worked toward getting the fragmented left to unite. It has increased the training of Honduran leftists. Honduras has been used as a clan-

destine conduit for weapons going to El Salvador and Guatemala, but some weapons also evidently are going to Honduran militants. There have been a number of terrorist acts, including the dynamiting of two power plants in July 1982 that blacked out most of the capital city of Tegucigalpa for two days. A few days later, 12 rebels and two policemen were killed in a shootout in

Tegucigalpa. Police reported that one of the rebels had been identified as a member of Nicaragua's FSLN. In September, a dozen members of the Cinchonero Popular Liberation Movement seized the Chamber of Commerce building in San Pedro Sula and took hostage 105 business and government leaders. The terrorists made a number of demands which apparently were not met.

Two Nicaraguan militia members are part of permanent watch patrol on frontier between Nicaragua and Honduras. Photo: J.L. Atlan/Syigma



(44,000 square miles, population just under 10 million), Cuba is involved globally. It provides military and technical assistance and advisers to countries in Africa and the Middle East and even as far away as Vietnam (300 civilian advisers). At present, there are some 65,000 Cuban military and civilian personnel overseas. There are about 25,000 Cuban troops in Angola, some 12,000 in Ethiopia and about 3,000 military personnel in other countries.

To support Fidel Castro's military organization, the Soviet Union not only sends weaponry but also maintains a significant military presence on the island. This includes:

- An army brigade of 2,600 to 3,000 men based outside Havana. This consists of one tank and three motorized rifle battalions plus support units. The brigade symbolizes Russia's military commitment to Cuba and also provides security for Soviet personnel and installation.
- A military advisory group consisting of at least 2,000 personnel. These provide technical advice for Cuba's sophisticated air, sea and ground equipment. (In addition to the military personnel, there are 6,000 to 8,000 Soviet civilian advisers in Cuba, including intelligence personnel.)

● In 1969 Soviet warships began visit-Cuba. Since then at least 21 Soviet naval task forces have sailed to the Caribbean, and in almost every case, they visited Cuban ports. Soviet intelligence-gathering ships operating off the U.S. East Coast call at Cuban ports.

● Since 1975, pairs of TU-95 Bear-D reconnaissance aircraft have been flying to Cuba and remaining for weeks at a time. The planes support Soviet naval maneuvers in the Atlantic and spy on U.S. and NATO naval maneuvers and sea trials. It is believed that the TU-95s can be modified to carry nuclear payloads.

● Early in 1976 and during 1978, when Cuban pilots were used in Angola and Ethiopia, Soviet fliers filled in for them in Cuba so that the country's air strength would not be diminished — and it enabled the Russians to become familiar with flying on the island.

● One of the most important aspects of the Soviet military presence in Cuba is a massive intelligence-gathering (monitoring) installation near Havana. This facility, the largest such Soviet facility outside Russia, listens in on all military and civilian radio communications in the southeastern and eastern United States — including Washington. The installation is so secret and important that no

Cubans are allowed to enter it.

What does this expanding communist military might in the Caribbean portend?

Nestor D. Sanchez, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for inter-American affairs and the Pentagon's top hand on Latin America, warned in a speech: "... Communist expansion could lead to an extensive Soviet permanent presence in the region with significant military consequences. It could literally place hostile forces and weapon systems capable of striking targets deep in the United States on our borders and adjacent waters. Soviet strategic capabilities — already substantial — would be increased significantly. It could provide air and naval bases — such as those under construction in [Cuba's ally] Grenada — for the recovery of Soviet aircraft after strategic missions. Both the Soviet Pacific and Atlantic fleets could operate near our shores without having to return to the USSR for maintenance...."

"Soviet/Cuban expansion in Latin America would require significant alteration in current U.S. forward deployment since a major threat would now exist in an area previously considered militarily secure." ☒



ABOVE: Sandinista soldiers, reservists and militia returning from patrol near Rancho Grande, 24 hours after an attack from Contras in March '83. Photo: Diego Goldberg/Sigma **BELOW:** Body of Contra killed near Rancho Grande on 26 March 1983. Photo: Claude Urraca/Sigma

Some hostages escaped, others were released. The terrorists were offered safe passage out of the country. The last of the hostages were freed and the rebels flew to Panama and then went to Cuba.

Costa Rica — Costa Rica is the most peaceful and democratic country in Central America; indeed it has the most stable democracy in all Latin America. This, however, has not made it immune to attack by *Fidelista* followers. There have been bombings, shootings and kidnappings by terrorists. Most of the terrorist activities have been conducted not by Costa Ricans but by foreigners, making it apparent that Costa Rica is under attack from abroad (see "Costa Rica: A Domino in Line," SOF, August '83).

When they uncovered a terror cell in San Jose, Costa Rican police arrested one Chilean, one Argentine, two Nicaraguans, two Costa Ricans and three Salvadorans. Three officials of the Nicaraguan Embassy in San Jose were found to be implicated in a bombing and were expelled from the country. Also known to have operated in Costa Rica are members of El Salvador's Farabundo Marti Front, the current name for that country's guerrilla organizations.

Even as it sought to subvert four Central American countries, Cuba was militarily building up its ally, Nicaragua. Russia strengthened Cuba; Cuba strengthened Nicaragua. Cuba has about 5,000 civilian and 3,000 military and security advisers in Nicaragua. (There are also advisers from the Soviet Union, East Germany, Bulgaria, North Korea and the PLO). The Nicaraguan armed forces are being increased from a currently estimated strength of 138,000



BELOW: Honduran Army troop patrols border with FN FAL rifle to keep Sandinistas from making cross-border operations into Honduras in search of Contras. Photo: Randy Taylor/Sigma



men to 250,000, with 50,000 in active forces and 200,000 in the militia and reserves. Even at its present level, the Sandinista army is the largest force any Central American country has ever had.

Approximately 70 Nicaraguans are being trained as jet pilots and mechanics in Bulgaria. Existing landing strips in Nicaragua are being lengthened and will be able to accommodate the most sophisticated Soviet aircraft. Although there are presently no MiGs in Nicaragua, they could be flown in quickly from Cuba.

The Nicaraguans have received about 100 antiaircraft guns, almost 1,000 East German trucks and Soviet howitzers with ranges of more than 27 kilometers. They have received Soviet T/54-T/55 tanks, possibly enough (close to 50) to form two battalions. The Nicaraguans have also been equipped with antitank guns, howitzers, helicopters, amphibious ferries and armored personnel carriers.

Nicaragua's naval force consists of 15 patrol boats. Their intrusions into Costa Rican waters have been a constant source of friction with that country.

The long-range plan being pursued by Moscow and Havana is plain to see. These are the goals:

1. To build up Nicaragua militarily, so that it will be increasingly difficult for anti-communists — inside or outside the country — to destroy the Sandinista government. At the same time, Nicaragua serves as the base for the subversion of the rest of Central

America.

2. Once Central America, or a good part of it, is conquered, the next major target will be the Mexican oil fields. These lie a little more than 100 miles north of the Guatemalan-Mexican border. Having these wells under communist control would relieve the Soviet Union of the huge burden of supporting Cuba with a continuous flow of oil — and it would deprive the United States of an important petroleum source. Mexico's growing instability may prove a fertile ground for Cuban agitation.

3. Once these initial goals are achieved, to turn south. The Panama Canal and the huge, vital Venezuelan oilfields are probable targets for communist subversion.

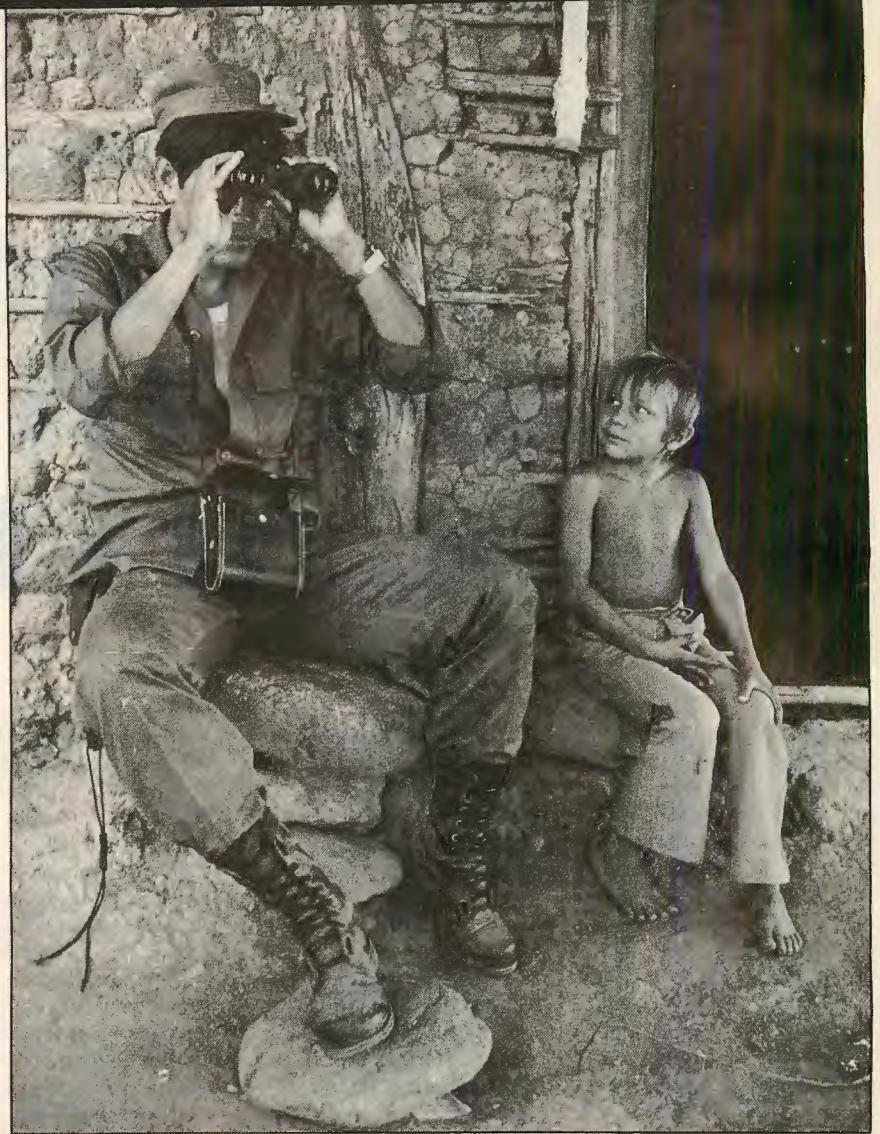
4. To build up Cuba militarily. Initially, the Soviet/Cuban goal was to give Cuba adequate defenses to protect the government against internal insurrection and attacks by Cuban exiles and discourage the United States from any thought of quick victory should it decide to try to overthrow Castro by force.

The extent and nature of the buildup of the past two years, however, has significantly changed the strategic picture. Cuba has been equipped with troop-carrying helicopters and recently with two landing craft, and the country has some 4,000 airborne troops. This means that Cuba now has the capability of sending a military force anywhere in the Caribbean area (and anywhere in Central America if Nicaragua serves as a base). Furthermore, Cuba can support such a force with warships and aircraft.

Within the global context, too, Cuba has assumed strategic importance. If there were to be a war between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, the United States would have to use a considerable portion of its forces to conquer Cuba before it could come fully to Europe's rescue. Today, 44 percent of all foreign tonnage entering the United States and 45 percent of the crude oil coming from abroad pass through the Caribbean. It is estimated that in the event of war, half of NATO's supplies from the United States would be shipped from Gulf ports. Cuba, now armed with MiGs, submarines and fast surface craft, is in a position to cause serious damage to these sea lines. The Russians, having conducted numerous aircraft and warship training missions to Cuba, are now familiar with the area and could bolster the Cuban striking capability with their own ships and planes.

Thus, it becomes clear that what is happening in Cuba and in Central America is not a localized affair of minimal interest to the United States. It is not a simple matter of a few more banana-republic uprisings.

A major strategic power play is underway. Fidel Castro — and the Kremlin — mean to win. The Central American guerrillas, Castro boasted early in 1983, "are in-



ABOVE: Honduran Army soldier keeps close watch on frontier shared with Nicaragua, an unstable area due to repeated clashes between Nicaraguan Sandinista and Contra forces. Government sources in Tegucigalpa report that they are "ready at any time" to defend Honduran sovereignty. Photo: Randy Taylor/Sygma BELOW: Photo: Courtesy of Department of Defense



Continued on page 82

SOF Exclusive
from Nicaragua's Front Line

CONTRAS HOPE TO TURN COMMUNIST TIDE

by Bob Poos

IT all started with a thrilling thunder of drums and ringing of bugles. The Contras, Nicaraguan exiles sworn to overthrow the Marxist Sandinistas ruling their country, claimed three towns taken and many casualties inflicted, in a "three-front invasion." The Sandinistas lent some initial credence to this by rushing to the United Nations and complaining about "counter-revolutionaries" trained, armed and directed by the CIA.

For about two weeks, the world believed that a major civil war had indeed erupted between some 2,000 to 4,000 Contras and the Nicaraguan Army and militia. There was some fighting between the two, but an SOF reporter in Honduras traveling extensively along the Nicaraguan border and talking to many sources found that actual developments amounted to something less than a full-scale war.

What actually happened was a widespread movement of Contras operating under the recently reorganized *Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense* or Nicaraguan Democratic Force (for more information, see "FDN Directorate," p. 53) from training bases inside Honduras to locations at various depths of penetration into Nicaragua. In so doing, their patrols occasionally collided with Nicaraguan militia looking for them.

The movement came largely because of Honduran pressure to move the Contras out of their country before the much more powerful Nicaraguan armed forces used the Contras' presence as an excuse to invade Honduras. The FDN Contras didn't need much urging. Armed, supplied and trained by the CIA, FDN leadership had long wanted to do something more than stage annoying raids into Nicaragua from about 10 training camps located near the Honduran/Nicaraguan border.

There are three primary forces opposing the Sandinistas: the FDN with 4,000 to 5,000 Contras under arms; the Misurasata, an alliance of Miskito and Suma Indians (fiercely independent people who have resisted Sandinista efforts to nationalize their small farm holdings and

fishing operations and have been driven away from their homes by Sandinista militiamen), with perhaps 1,000 armed guerrillas; and 500 to 800 men commanded by Eden Pastora, former Sandinista officer known as Comandante Zero, who operated from Costa Rica on Nicaragua's southern border before moving inside Nicaragua.

The deepest penetration to date has been a Contra raid on the Nicaraguan city of Esquipulas, only 60 miles from Managua. The Contras broadcast over their clandestine, Honduran-based "Radio 15 September" that the town had been captured and occupied along with two smaller nearby communities, San Dionisio and San Ramon. That was untrue, but there was sporadic fighting in the area with some light casualties taken on both sides.

Pastora, with the smallest of the three forces, nevertheless is believed to have suffered the heaviest casualties in one of his raids: two men killed and 40 captured in a foray about 10 miles south of the Honduran/Nicaraguan border.

Nicaraguan Contras have used both Honduras and Costa Rica as launching bases to raid Sandinista forces. Here Honduran-based Contra carries FN FAL on raid into northern Nicaragua. Photo: James Natchwey/Black Star







A Pastora spokesman in Costa Rica claimed five Nicaraguans killed and 17 wounded in what was essentially an ambush by Pastora's group.

Pastora used to pack a lot of clout in Latin America because of his charisma: As a Sandinista officer, he gained worldwide acclaim by leading an attack on the Nicaraguan National Palace which set the stage for the final overthrow of Nicaraguan dictator, Anastasio Somoza. Pastora, known as a moderate leftist, grew disillusioned with his former comrades when they allied themselves with Cuba and adopted Marxism. He has lost a lot of the former respect he held because of long, rambling, sometimes virtually incoherent speeches made over a radio frequency he calls Radio Sandino.

An FDN spokesman told SOF, "Pastora's main problem is he thinks military action is the solution to everything. We believe freedom for Nicaragua can only be won through a combination of it and political activity."

That is why the FDN has announced a "peace initiative" which it invited the Sandinistas to share. An FDN spokesman said it is willing to "immediately cease all defensive military actions" within Nicaragua if the Sandinistas accept the 12-point program — a virtual repudiation of Marxism. It includes: general amnesty, revocation of the state of emergency imposed in March '82, permission for the return home of all exiles, an end to religious persecution and an end to restrictions on human rights and freedom of the press.

Contras inside Nicaragua carry AK-47 assault rifles. Photo: James Nachtwey/Black Star



Another formerly popular anti-Sandinista leader, Juan Carlos (see "A Day with the Jackals," SOF, September '81), has stepped entirely out of the picture. He now lives quietly in Miami.

FDN spokesmen in the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, claimed to SOF that they have largely purged the movement of the worst elements of Somoza's old National Guard, hated and feared by the people, who still are unlikely to ally themselves with a force composed entirely of former Guardsmen.

"We only have about five-percent former Guardsmen serving in our army," said the spokesman. He did concede that most senior NCOs and company-level officers are one-time Guardsmen: "They're the only trained, experienced men we had available."

Soon after the Contra troop movement began, the Sandinista government invited more than 100 journalists to come over and enjoy a front-row seat at the battle scenes. About 100, some from as far as Australia, accepted the invitation, but they saw little evidence of any fighting other than militiamen patrolling in Nueva Segovia Province, which accounts for about 40 percent of Nicaragua's Honduran border area.

The terrain in which the Contras have settled themselves is either rough, scrub jungle with high hills or coastal swamps, and both areas are heat-seared. Extremely well-trained, tough troops experienced in counterinsurgency warfare would be required to dislodge them. Nicaragua's militia is not that. Its army is

Two Contras armed with folding stock AK-47 and FN FAL rifles watch for Sandinistas. Photo: James Nachtwey/Black Star

believed to be Latin America's largest, best-trained (by Cubans and East Europeans) and most heavily armed army. The ComBloc weapons inventory ranges from AK-47s to T55 tanks. It has 22,000 regulars and 10,000 active reserves, while the militia numbers some 50,000.

The initial exaggerated reports of heavy fighting gave rise to numerous *bolases* or rumors throughout Central America, particularly in Tegucigalpa, where there was briefly a case of war jitters

because of one of them. This particular rumor said that the Nicaraguans would use the violence as an excuse to invade Honduras in the pretext of looking for guerrilla camps. The under-trained 27,000-man Honduran Army would probably fare badly in a conflict of that nature.

The only reason Nicaragua didn't invade, so this rumor continued, was fear that President Reagan would employ a



FDN DIRECTORATE

by Bob Poos

The seven-member Directorate composing top leadership of the *Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense* (FDN) is a diverse group that includes businessmen and educators persecuted both by the old Somoza dictatorship and its Marxist Sandinista replacement, a woman and a former Somoza Army officer, its only military man. They are:

Alfonso Callejas Deshon, 60, who holds a degree in civil engineering from the University of Santa Clara, Calif., and is credited with developing the Nicaraguan cotton industry. He was vice president under Somoza, but resigned his cabinet-level position in 1974 in protest of Somoza's brutality. After his property and other assets were confiscated by the Sandinistas in 1982, he fled Nicaragua and joined the FDN.

Lucia Cardenal Salazar, 42, widow of Jorge Salazar Arguella, who initiated a profit-sharing plan among workers on his plantation. The Salazars worked in behalf of the Sandinista movement but Sandinista security agents assassinated him in 1980. Mrs. Salazar then left Nicaragua, became active in anti-Sandinista political activities and became an FDN director this year.

Adolfo Calero Portocarrero, 52, former general manager of Coca-Cola® bottling plant in Managua and active in other business interests. He was treasurer of the Nicaraguan Conservative Democratic Party. Somoza jailed him as a political prisoner in 1978. He became equally disillusioned with the Sandinistas after their takeover in 1979. He fled Nicaragua this year despite being one of the FSLN (Sandinista) Party's founding members.

Marco Zeledon, 51, businessman who in 1961 founded and became chairman of *Cereales de Centroamericana*, the Central American arm of Quaker Oats Co. *Cereales de Centroamericana* is one of the first business operations in Latin America to establish an employee profit-sharing plan and grant sick leave at full pay, as well as furnishing educational grants for employees and their children. The Sandinistas appropriated the firm shortly after that movement went Marxist and Zeledon fled to become an FDN leader.

Enrique Bermudez Varela, 51, is the only military man on the FDN directorate. He graduated from the Nicaraguan Military Academy and attended General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kan., military engineering school in Brazil and counter-insurgency courses at Ft. Gulick, Canal Zone. Varela served in various Army units, was a member of the Inter-American Peace Force in Santo Domingo during the 1965 Dominican crisis and is the former defense attache in Washington.



Dr. Edgar Chamorro Coronel, (pictured above), educator, who holds four university degrees: Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts, University of Quito, Ecuador; Bachelor's Degree in Theology, St. Louis University, Mo.; Master's in *Educational Psychology*, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.; Doctoral Degree in Education, Harvard. Coronel was director of Nicaraguan Development Bank and a leader of the Nicaraguan Conservative (anti-Somoza) Party. When the Sandinistas assumed power in 1979, he aptly described it as "replacing one evil with another" and left.

Indalecio Rodriguez Alania, 45, veterinarian and former president, University of Central America, who comes from a family long opposed to Somoza. He led the *Partido Liberal Independiente* and thus was twice imprisoned by the dictator, 1956 and '59. After exiling himself in 1960, Alania became a founding member of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional* (Sandinista Party). Following the Marxist takeover in 1981, he again chose exile.

NICARAGUA

Nicaraguan invasion of Honduras as an excuse to send in the Marines. And Nicaragua knows all about the Marines. They occupied it during most of the 1920s and part of the '30s.

The most prevalent *bola* was that Sandinista leadership deliberately puffed up reports of fighting in order to create war hysteria and a spirit of patriotism to take the Nicaraguan people's minds off unfulfilled promises of elections and a ruined economy that features staggering inflation.

Speculation also went that the Sandinistas were very much alarmed by the raids' proximity to Managua — just 60 miles in the case of Esquipulas. When the Sandinistas themselves started conducting successful raids that close to the capital, they were well on their way to toppling Somoza.

Contra bands are tough, well-armed and disciplined. Web gear is of U.S.-issue and uniforms are much like the old U.S. Army and Marine green fatigues, while personal weapons are FNs and every man carries a Browning 9mm pistol. The Contras also have M79 grenade launchers, M60 machine guns and LAWs. Communication gear includes PRC-25 field radios.

Contra spokesmen in Tegucigalpa say they appreciate American assistance but object to the strings attached to it. "Although the United States is helping us, it says no, no, no to everything. Our men want to do spectacular things, but every time they get the momentum, the United States stops them. It's like an invisible hand holding the strings."

The Contra objectives are quite clear: overthrow the Sandinista Marxist government and replace it with a Western-style democracy, or their version of one based on their 12-point program. That would be a nice bonus for the CIA and the Reagan administration, but U.S. interests are more limited: scare the Sandinistas badly enough so they



ABOVE: Contras in Honduran training camp pray for return of Nicaragua to the people. To supplement prayers, they carry FN FAL and RPG-7. LEFT: Contra officer transmits latest intelligence to another camp. Photos: James Nachtwey/Black Star BELOW: Arms that Sandinistas claim to have captured from Contras include Czech 7.62mm Model 52/57 Semiautomatic Rifles and AK-47s. Since Czech weapons are standard Sandinista arms, SOF suspects some trickery here. Photo: J.L. Atlas/Syigma





stop exporting armed communist revolutions elsewhere in Central America, especially El Salvador.

Further toward that end, the United States has hinted strongly that it is considering imposition of economic pressures, including severe restrictions on Nicaraguan sugar exports to the States — a potentially crippling blow to an already chaotic economy that depends on sugar exports as its main source of foreign revenue.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, the Democratic-controlled House Intelligence Committee, chaired by left-leaning Massachusetts Rep. Edward Boland, nearly succeeded in cutting off U.S. aid to the Contras. Only a special White House briefing by President Reagan to the committee members, followed by his speech before a joint session of Congress, prevented the cut-off of funds. As the measure's language finally read, it would stop covert assistance to the Contras but permit overt aid. The overt fund would contain \$30 million for the rest of this year and \$50 million for 1984.

The most ironic thing about all this is that the Sandinistas, who overthrew a corrupt, brutal, despised dictator with limited aid from Fidel Castro and much popular support, are now confronted with exactly the same situation. Only this time Contra aid comes from the United States and Sandinista popular support is eroding because of nonexistent elections, human-rights violations that, in the Indians' case, amount to near genocide, a government-muzzled press and religious persecution in a country staunchly Roman Catholic.

There is no telling yet the final outcome in Nicaragua, but one thing seems clear: The Sandinistas are in for a long, ever-more-bloody struggle that is certain to further cripple their economic situation. At best, it could be the West's first really positive achievement in Latin America for a very long time. At least it might serve to hold Marxism in check in this area so critical to U.S. interests and domestic security. ☒

MISSION TO MOCORON

Genocide Sandinista Style

Text & Photos by Bob Poos

OUR twin-engine Piper Apache circled a dirt airstrip at Rus Rus, Honduras, some five kilometers from the Nicaraguan border. The pilot, Capt. Humbert Ochoa, remarked, "That strip was overgrown with weeds last time I was here. Now it's cleared and I don't know who did it — the CIA, the Contras, maybe even the army, but we better go back to Mocoron [10 miles further into Honduras]."

Aboard the plane were Juan Tamayo of the *Miami Herald*, Mike Boettcher and Willis Perry of Cable News Network and myself. We were investigating reports that hundreds of Miskito Indians were fleeing Nicaragua under bombing or shelling by troops of the Marxist Sandinista government and



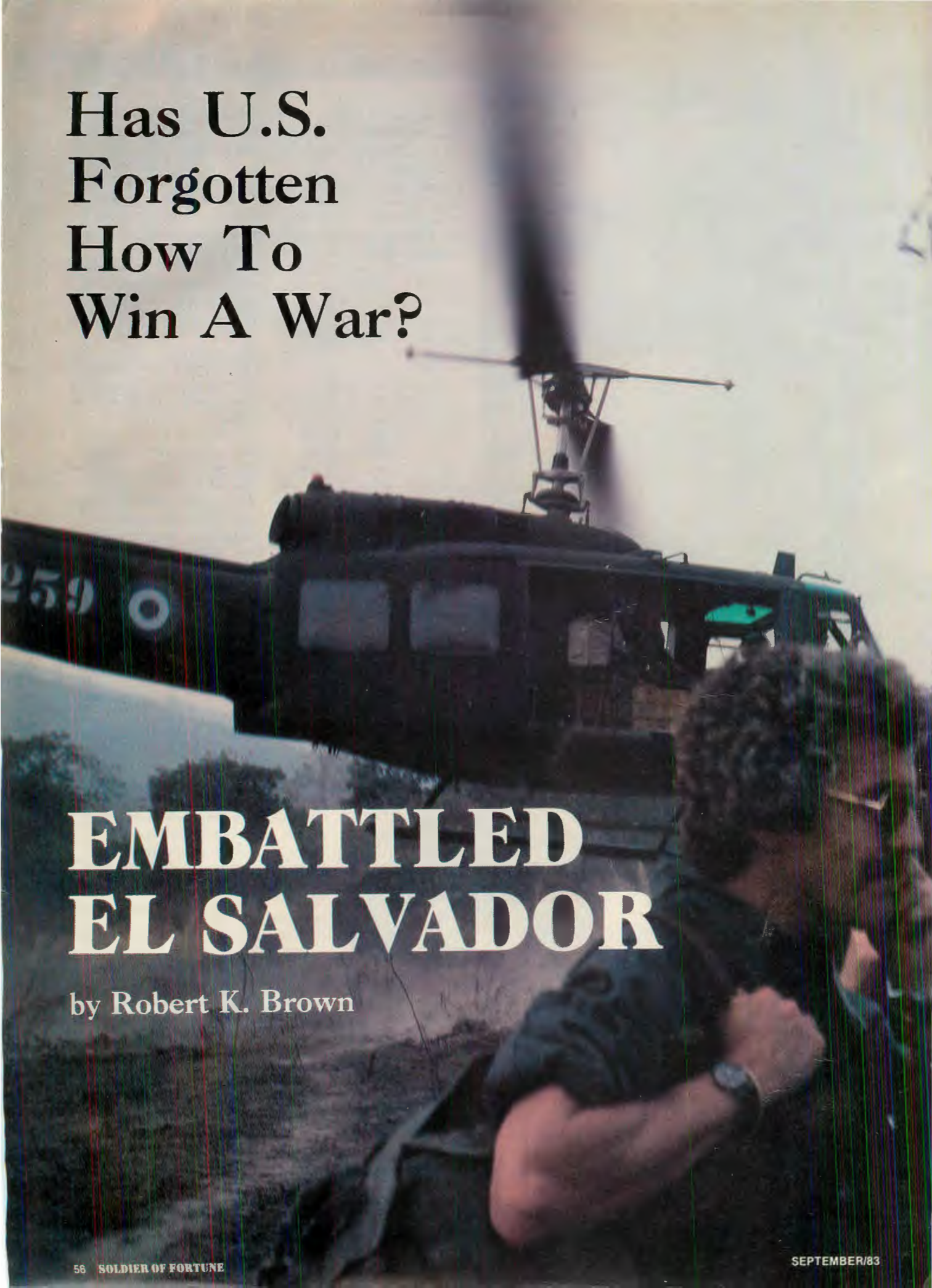
Sick child recuperates in hospital at refugee center in Mocoron, Honduras, just across border from Nicaragua. Mother and child were among 400 Miskito Indians who fled their village after it was bombed or shelled.

raked by gunfire along their six-day journey to safety across the Coco River. Both refugees and Western relief organization personnel at the refugee camp in Mocoron said the reports were basically true.

Rus Rus is an initial collection point for people fleeing Sandinista terror. It is a small collection of huts and offers basic medical services to the sick, wounded and elderly. Mocoron is a larger complex and includes a small, crude (but for this part of the world serviceable) hospital staffed by physicians from "Doctors Without Borders," volunteers from Europe and the United States who contribute from six months to a year at refugee camps in troubled areas of the world. It is also where U.S. and Honduran forces held joint maneuvers recently. In fact, the airstrip served as a DZ for Honduran paratroopers.

Other refugee organizations operating in Honduras include the UN and World Relief, an organization financed by National Evangelical Churches, a collective of U.S. Protestant groups.

Continued on page 79



Has U.S.
Forgotten
How To
Win A War?

EMBATTLED EL SALVADOR

by Robert K. Brown



THE United States may lose the war in El Salvador in the near future.

This, unfortunately, is a conclusion from which there may be no escape. The guerrillas in the past few weeks have moved into Phase III of an insurgency. By massing enormous numbers of guerrillas — the equivalent of several battalions — the G leaders have demonstrated they can mass sufficient force to seize almost any objective at a time of their choosing. In contrast, the Salvadoran government, as is the case in most insurgencies, must parcel 90 percent of its force throughout the country in a static mode for security purposes.

Granted, the Gs have yet to confront the Salvo elite immediate-reaction battalions in a set-piece battle.

However, if the communist Gs continue to increase their military power at the same rate as they have over the last two years, we may well witness a couple of mini-Dien Bien Phus coupled with the disgusting spectacle of American embassy personnel being evacuated a la Saigon 1975.

Then we will see El Salvador become to Honduras and Guatemala — or Mexico — what Nicaragua has become to El Salvador. What then, after El Salvador? Do we stop them in Mexico?

Not likely, many astute political observers feel, because of the current political and economic instability of Mexico, combined with the basic hostility of large segments of the Mexican elite toward the United States. Mexico, with an astronomical birth rate/population explosion (a population now estimated at 70 million), with over 50-percent unemployment, endemic inflation, enormous social problems due to the

gap between the rich and poor, and an armed forces strength of just over 100,000, would be a very difficult and expensive place to try to stop the northward march of communist-backed tyranny.

Where's the next place we can reasonably stop the communists? The Rio Grande. Where, according to highly placed officials in the Department of Defense (DOD), it would take three Army corps to secure our southern border. Which would require moving *all* our active Marine and Army divisions to the Rio Grande, including all our troops within NATO. And wouldn't the Russians love that.

A bit far-fetched? Perhaps, but then again, we are sure the hundreds of U.S. servicemen who died at Pearl Harbor thought the same thing on 6 December 1941. And who would have believed then that 34 years later the United States would be defeated by a country of 19 million peasants in Southeast Asia?

Why are we going to lose our chance for victory in El Salvador? Primarily because the U.S. Congress refuses to provide the necessary funds and advisers. SOF confirmed this during our recent fact-finding mission to that war-ravaged country.

In a nutshell, if the El Salvador line-company weapons — M16s, M60s and .50-caliber Brownings — don't function, how the hell can you avoid defeat, much less win? More about that horror story later on in our report.

To date, the policy of the U.S. government — at least as enacted by the neo-isolationists, pacifists and naive tooth-fairy liberals in Congress — is clearly, though perhaps not intentionally, to give just

LEFT: John Early, SOF's Airborne Operations Editor, and Alex McColl (Director of Special Projects) move out from Salvo Huey. A few hours later, SOF team helped terminate three communist Gs. **Photo:** Ralph Edens **BELOW:** Belted and ready, Airborne Bn M60 gunner seeks targets. Ribbon on front sights aids ID in the field. **Photo:** Ralph Edens



enough aid to the anti-communist government in El Salvador in order to achieve the following:

1. Get the United States thoroughly tarred in the international left-wing press for supporting "yet another corrupt, right-wing military dictatorship against the forces of liberation and agrarian reform."

2. Ensure that the present government in El Salvador is identified as a stooge of the CIA, Wall Street, multi-national capitalism, U.S. imperialism, etc. This same government, by the way, was elected by a tremendous majority in an internationally supervised, free, democratic election, participated in by 80 percent of eligible voters. Which is more than can be said for the present rulers of Nicaragua, Cuba, Cambodia or the Soviet Union. It is interesting to note that, on the other hand, the communist guerrillas told the Salvadoran voters, "Vote today, die tomorrow."

3. Ensure the ultimate victory of the Marxists only after the maximum degree of tragedy and suffering have been inflicted on the Salvadoran people, and in ways that cause maximum damage to what remains of the credibility of the United States as a reliable ally, especially in Latin America.

4. Provide for a comprehensive take-over of all Central America, and eventually Panama and Mexico by the ideological and political brothers of the folks who brought deep respect for religious and individual liberty to Afghanistan and creative population engineering to Cambodia, in which countries even Himmler and Eichmann couldn't have done a better job.

On principle, we don't support the "conspiracy of evil men" theory of what's wrong with the world, and try to avoid attributing to deliberate malice and treason what can, in any case, be explained by mere incompetence, stupidity and naivete. But in the case of El Salvador, these defenses are wearing thin in the face of overwhelming evidence. Or is it just that getting re-elected is more important than saving our country?

And who are these communist guerrillas? Are they masses of poor, oppressed peasants? No. They are dissident oligarchs, students, professors and intellectuals from the middle class with a few disaffected *campesinos* and bandit types. The communist guerrillas are not getting significant voluntary support from the peasants.

Because they do not have the support of the people, they consistently attack the physical infrastructure of the community. When they blow a bridge, they annoy people. Not because they are stupid but because such an action is good for world publicity and the people they annoy don't support them anyway.

Historically, every guerrilla/terrorist movement has had the option of attacking the physical infrastructure. And, historically, the reason they have refrained from so doing has been that they do not want to

antagonize the people who support them or whose support they wish to gain. However, the communist guerrillas in El Salvador are simply interested in gaining power by force.

Congress, heavily influenced by left-wing groups and the liberal media, who insist on focusing on "human rights" at the expense of U.S. national survival, is implementing this impending defeat by failing to provide sufficient funds and advisers, and by hamstringing advisers with stupid, unrealistic restrictions.

Insufficient Funds: When El Salvador falls, history will place the blame squarely on the shoulders of the U.S. Congress, which has endlessly bickered over the pitiful amounts of aid to be allocated to defeating the Marxist insurgents.

In '78 and '79, we gave the Salvos \$50,000; in '80, \$5.9 million; in '81, \$35.5 million; in '82, 82 million and so far in '83, \$26.3 million. This is totally inadequate to cover the cost of transforming a 6,000-man, inexperienced, underequipped army into a 22,000-man modern military force capable of defeating a communist-supported, communist-led insurgency.

The problem was succinctly summed up by one highly placed DOD official who told us, "We simply do not have the resources to do the job. We have had no money since the first of the year [this interview took place when we presented our after-action report to a number of officials in DOD in early May '83]. We are so short of funds, we must rob Peter to pay Paul; for example, we have had to reallocate funds for spare parts for aircraft and helicopters to purchase needed small-arms ammo."

Obviously, this movement of what funds are available would be disruptive to any supply system.

Another example dramatizes the need for more funds. During our February trip, a Mil Group adviser told us that the Salvadorans desperately needed an MTT to instruct in the care and maintenance of their medical equipment in the military hospital. But the Mil Group reluctantly determined they could not allocate funds as all funds had to be targeted for stopping the guerrillas from overrunning the country. A case of "bullets before bandages."

How many Salvadoran troopers and civilians died because of this? Perhaps Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) or Senator Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) would care to comment.

A specific example of the stupidity/timid-ity of Congress can be found in one of the limitations on how aid can be spent. Recently, Senator Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.) proposed a piece of legislation that passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee 17-1 that requires \$20 million of the aid allocated to be spent on training Salvadoran troops in the United States. Kassebaum's office claims it is only twice as expensive to train them in the United States than to send



ABOVE: Big John Donovan is happy in his work as he conducts basic demo classes for the Atlacatl Bn. Instruction included his recipe for homemade claymores. **Photo: Robert K. Brown**
RIGHT: Salvo trooper didn't believe Big John when told a charge was going off: He believes now. **Photo: Ralph Edens**

trainers to El Salvador. (The DOD official stated it was three times as expensive.)

The rationale for this "waste" is that such a policy would eliminate the need for sending additional U.S. advisers/trainers to El Salvador and thus reduce the risk of more adviser/trainers being killed by the guerrillas/terrorists.

We'll give her the benefit of the doubt by theorizing that she may have been motivated by the assumption that this was the only way she could get additional funds approved by Congress. (As we go to press, this particular piece of legislation has not



yet been debated on the floor of the Senate but will be this summer.)

Insufficient Trainers/Advisers: It has been difficult to ascertain when the government/State Department/Department of Defense decided that U.S. personnel should be limited to the magical number of 55. One explanation is that the 55-man limit was agreed to by the State Department and DOD several years ago when it was decided that number could get the job done — then. As mentioned earlier, the size of the Salvo army has been increased nearly fourfold — the number of U.S. personnel has not.

Furthermore, 25 to 30 of the U.S. mission are involved in logistics, administration and maintenance. Also, a significant amount of their time is spent preparing reports for higher headquarters.

At present, there is only one full-time U.S. training officer for all the Salvo armed forces. The remaining man-days allocated for training are filled by Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) sent for the most part from Ft. Bragg or Ft. Gulick in the Canal Zone.

Furthermore, the Mobile Training Team's impact is significantly diluted because once the team leaves there is no follow-through, no capability of ensuring that the lessons taught are retained and used by troops. It's about as effective as a basic training company which receives eight weeks training and then is turned loose on its own.

There is no better example than that of the FAS Airborne Battalion which, on an operation two weeks after the MTTs left, could not reassemble their M60s correctly. (A possible explanation is that for reasons unknown, the Salvos do not assign individuals as permanent primary and assistant gunners on their crew-served weapons.)

The MTTs are not advisers in the Vietnam context since Congress prohibits them from accompanying Salvo units to the field or even going into operational areas. U.S. military personnel cannot even carry M16s. (Remember the big hullabaloo the *liberal* press made about a U.S. officer being seen/photographed carrying an M16? He was sent home. Naughty, naughty.)

The U.S. military, therefore, reluctantly relies on informally debriefing journalists — those who have military backgrounds and are willing to cooperate — on the Salvo effectiveness in the field.

Which makes about as much sense as the Washington Redskin coaching staff, after working all week with the team, waiting in the locker room during the Sunday game, and asking Howard Cosell for his opinion after they've lost.

Once again, to obtain maximum effectiveness and if we really want to win, U.S. personnel must be allowed to accompany Salvo units to the field and take the risk of incurring casualties. We find it ironic that those people who anguish about the death of a single adviser — not that it was not tragic

—accept the slaughter of innocent civilians without comment. In a recent Washington D.C. radio interview, Sen. Chris Dodd agonized at length over the execution of civilians by right-wing death squads while failing to give even passing mention to the innumerable murders committed by the guerrilla terrorists.

Unfortunately, to defend national interests it may be necessary to suffer casualties. But then, that's what national defense is all about, isn't it?

If political expediency absolutely precludes U.S. military personnel from going to the field, a quick fix to compensate for the lack of a sufficient number of advisers is to go to the private sector. Yes, that's right, like Air America. Hire, on a contract basis, combat-experienced Vietnam veterans who would train and advise; who would provide the necessary continuity and follow-through.

An oversimplified but basic concept would be as follows:

1. Assign two bilingual, qualified, experienced contract personnel to each of El Salvador's 14 departmental headquarters (the country is divided into 14 separate administrative areas). Contracts would be for six months or one year. They would be billeted in the Salvo Army quarters. (When presented with this concept, one high-ranking Salvo official shrugged his shoulders and asked, "Who would come; who

will do this difficult job and live under these terrible conditions?")

2. Assign on the same basis two contract personnel to each of the immediate-reaction battalions, for a total of 36.

3. Hire the number of necessary pilots for the air force to allow the FAS to use what air assets they have to the utmost. SOF's team did not have the expertise to determine the exact numbers required.

How do we pay for the above (assuming the ground advisers would be paid \$2,000 per month), if the Salvos do not have the funds and the U.S. government finds such a course politically inexpedient? Through the private sector. We have some suggestions regarding the funding problem, but are not going to print them.

Not often do foreigners have the opportunity to get down to the nuts-and-bolts level of a foreign army, as we did in El Salvador. In fact, we were presumptuous enough to think that, at the time this report was compiled, we had a better working knowledge of the Salvos at company level than many of the U.S. Mil Group members — especially since we were able to place a team with a Salvo unit on a combat operation.

For the many readers who do not have extensive military experience, we have rewritten a significant portion of our after-action report in narrative form to make for easier reading. We hope all you "profes-

sionals" will accept this format. Our report follows.

MISSION

by Alex McColl

A Team from *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine was in El Salvador from 20 through 30 April 1983. Their activities included discussions with and briefings by U.S. Military Group (Mil Group) personnel, training of selected elements of El Salvador's armed forces and participation in combat operations.

The SOF Team:

Robert K. Brown, Editor/Publisher of *Soldier of Fortune*. Lieutenant Colonel, Special Forces, USAR. One tour in Vietnam, including command of the Tong Le Chon Special Forces Camp and experience as an Infantry Battalion S2.

Alexander M. S. McColl, Director of Special Projects, SOF. Colonel, Special Forces, USAR. Eleven years active duty, including two tours in Vietnam (SSO ACSI J2 MACV, District Senior Adviser,

SOF's Medical Operations Editor, Dr. John Peters teaches Atlacatl Bn medics. Photo: Ralph Edens INSET: Doc Peters returns from medevac treating Salvo troops. Photo: Jim Fisher





Colonel Jose Bustillo, Salvadoran Air Force CO, accepts Hardcorps vests for chopper door-gunners and pilots from SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown. Vests were donated to Salvadoran cause by Richard Davis, President of Second Chance. Photo: Alex McColl

MACVSOG). Graduate of Army War College.

John Early, President, Albuquerque Parachute Center, Albuquerque, N.M. Chief Training Officer, Number 1 Parachute Training School. Former Captain, Selous Scouts, Rhodesian Army. Twelve years with U.S. Army Special Forces, including the siege of the Lang Vei SF Camp. Expert in all aspects of parachuting and antiterrorist operations.

Peder Lund, Publisher, Paladin Press, Boulder, Colo. Service in Vietnam included one year as an "A" Team commander and six months as a rifle company commander in the 9th Infantry Division.

John Donovan, owner, Donovan Dynamiting, Danvers, Ill. Major, Special Forces, USAR. Demolitions expert; after the U.S. government, his firm is the largest user of C4 in the United States.

"John Doe," weapons instructor, served with the USMC in Vietnam, three-year tour with Rhodesian SAS, later an NCO in the

Selous Scouts, Rhodesian Army. Noted expert in weapons instruction and antiterrorist and long-range recon operations.

Peter G. Kokalis, SOF Military Small Arms Editor. Served in U.S. Army with technical intelligence branch. Writer and expert on military automatic weapons

Ralph Edens, President, Security and Research, Ltd., Humble, Texas. International security consultant and unconventional-operations expert.

John Peters, M.D., SOF Paramedic Operations Editor. Medical Director, Parachute Medical Rescue Service. Noted instructor in combat and survival medicine, and expert in disaster-relief medicine.

Summary of Activities:

One team consisting of Early, Edens, Lund and McColl spent about 24 hours with the 1st Squadron (equivalent to a rifle company) of the FAS Airborne Battalion, which was conducting a combat operation in Cuscatlan Province, 24-25 April 1983. Lund remained with the squadron for two days after the other team members had returned to San Salvador. The team evaluated field tactical procedures, weapons training and maintenance, and related subjects. (See related story on p. 70.)

Donovan instructed Atlacatl Battalion troops on mines, booby-traps, demolitions and related subjects; evaluated their explo-



It's about 1000 miles from Washington, D.C., to Miami, and another 1000 miles from Miami to El Salvador. That's close to home.

sives inventory and storage procedures and prepared for them an explosives storage SOP.

John Doe conducted a sniper school for the Atlacatl Battalion.

Early inspected the Airborne Battalion's parachute loft and riggers.

Kokalis spent several days giving instruction on the disassembly, assembly, maintenance and employment of the M16-A1, M60 GMPG and .50-caliber M2 HBMG to the Atlacatl Battalion, the doorgunners of the FAS helicopter squadron and the base-defense battalion of the FAS (see "Arming El Salvador," p. 64). These units were selected because of their high priority and their being in the Ilopango/San Salvador area.

Peters spent several days consulting with the commanders of Salvadoran Army medical activities in the San Salvador area, and conducting classes on emergency life-saving procedures to Salvadoran enlisted medics and hospital corpsmen.

Brown and McColl conferred with senior Salvadoran officers and Mil Group members.

RIGGER'S REPORT

by John Early

Shortly after our arrival in El Salvador, the commander of the Air Force, Col. Juan Bustillo, invited us to observe the newly formed Salvadoran Airborne Battalion during its initial field deployment. The battalion is under the command of the Air Force.

While other SOFers inspected weapons and training procedures, I was introduced to the commanding officer, Maj. Turcios, and given a short, comprehensive briefing on the battalion's state of training and readiness. Maj. Turcios appeared to be a dedicated, professional officer in every sense as he answered my questions and conducted me through his battalion. Like many officers we observed, the major is extremely shorthanded in staff officers and is forced to do much of his own leg work.

After a brief walk-through, he gave me free run of the battalion and base area, and left orders with his subordinates that I be allowed access to anything I wished and that my suggestions were to be acted upon immediately.

I busied myself with an inspection of the parachute loft and its support areas. Although this battalion is not presently being used in the airborne role, it is in the process of equipping for a future airborne operation.

The rigger shed was manned by three eager, but poorly trained parachute riggers. I volunteered to advise them on how to get the battalion ready for airborne ops. One of the problems we encountered at the outset involved the pulling of parachute riggers from the loft to flesh out infantry platoons in the field. Since very few support personnel were left behind when the battalion went to





LEFT: John Early, Viet vet, CO of Rhodesian Airborne School and a Captain in Selous Scouts, examines canopy in Airborne rigger's loft. **Photo:** Jim Fisher
BELOW: Atlacatl sniper fires venerable .30-06 M1-D Garand, considered obsolete, but still an effective sniper's weapon. Lake City match ammo was used with excellent results. **Photo:** Ralph Edens



ABOVE: "John Doe" demonstrates prone position using pack as rest with M1-D to Atlacatl snipers. Salvo snipers proved eager and aggressive and had good marksmanship skills; however, M1-Ds lacked adequate spare parts and cleaning equipment. **Photo:** Ralph Edens
LEFT: McColl — behind Airborne RTO and followed by Lund — moves out on patrol hunting communist guerrillas. **Photo:** Ralph Edens

the field, little was accomplished in bringing the air items up-to-snuff or repairing the equipment damaged in training or operations.

When I asked who was responsible for this personnel utilization, I was told the chief rigger.

"Where is the chief rigger?" I asked.

"Oh, sir, he died in a parachute accident last week," the young soldier replied.

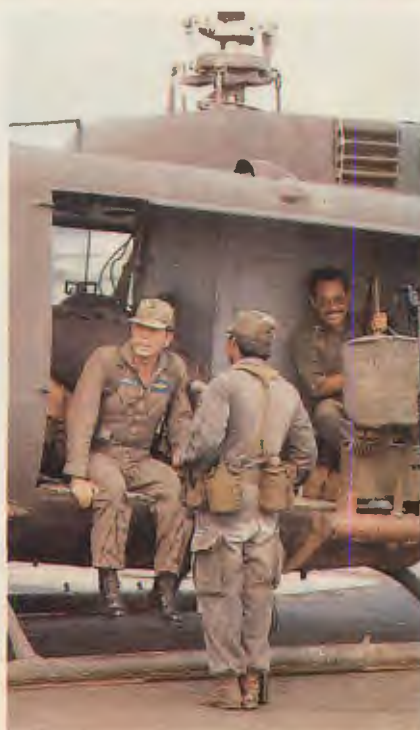
End of story. Just like everywhere else in the world: If no one is in charge, nothing gets done.

The parachute loft was housed in an old hangar that was well-suited for packing and storing the parachutes, but ill-prepared to house inspection areas or drying towers for the canopies. Many of the parachutes were simply stacked on the floor near the packing tables.

Repair facilities were no better than the storage one. The repair shop, with the sewing machines and other necessary repair tables and equipment, was so filled with parachutes awaiting repair that it couldn't be used. That, however, was not their major problem.

Upon questioning the riggers further, I learned that most of the sewing machines lacked spare parts and suffered from poor or nonexistent maintenance, making them inoperable. Attempting to sew a canopy patch, I found most of the machines needed to be timed. Of the five machines, only one was near working order, while the others were completely inoperative. Some even lacked needles, as well as other vital parts. The shop also needed proper patching materials and thread.

The young soldiers, although eager to



Continued on page 86

Headed out for ops, Air Force commander Col. Bustillo locks heels of young trooper. Door-gunner at far right is just glad it's not him. Photo: Robert K. Brown



**Kokalis, carrying Vietnam-era M16,
takes off on assignment in UH-1H
bearing M60 door gun.
Photo: Robert K. Brown**

U.S. Gives Brave Warriors Worn-out Weapons

ARMING EL SALVADOR

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

FOUR companies of men pile out of new, tan-colored Ford, three-ton trucks and fall into formation in front of the headquarters building at Ilopango Airport, El Salvador. The usual grunting and straining is accompanied by the clatter and banging of field equipment and infantry weapons.

My attention is drawn first to their cammies, a pattern I do not recognize. My eyes sweep upward and lock on their faces — regal Mayan features covered by death masks applied with black face paint.

“Who are they?” I ask, turning to the Mil Group adviser standing next to me. “The Atlacatl Battalion,” he replies. “Bad asses, the toughest unit in El Salvador — an immediate-reaction battalion. They really kick ass. When they move in, the Gees [guerrillas] move out or die.”

They are dressed to kill, with M16A1s, M60 GPMGs, .50-cal. M2 HBs, M79 grenade launchers, 90mm recoilless rifles, 60mm and 81mm mortars and belts of 7.62mm NATO ammo slung across their shoulders. They look bad all right — but unfortunately so do their weapons (in the case of their small arms, I mean “bad” literally: used up, worn out).

You notice the M60s first. The aluminum top covers have long ago lost their black anodized finish. The bright metal glares angrily in my eyes, as it must, even at great distance, into the watchful eyes of the enemy.

My thoughts race back to my first full day in-country. That afternoon I gave a class to 83 men of the antiaircraft/perimeter-defense battery at Ilopango air field on the disassem-

bly-assembly/cleaning and maintenance of the M16A1 rifle. It was the first of many revealing experiences. All the rifles were in the 5,300,000 to 5,400,000 serial-number

range (as were all the others I examined in El Salvador). Vietnam-era production. Loose, almost used up, with very little life left in them, one step away from the scrap heap.

Understand one thing. Modern military small arms do not have the life span of their predecessors such as the '03 Springfield or the M1 Garand. They don't have to. Weapons generations are of much shorter duration these days. Technology changes with ever-increasing acceleration whether we like it or not. Lightweight alloys ease the soldier's burden in the field, but fall apart faster — especially when they are used often in the full-auto mode, a feature unknown to earlier-vintage rifles. It's an acceptable trade-off for major military powers, but not so satisfactory for the poor devils they are eventually dumped on.

The young troops of El Salvador are eager, attentive, courteous and bright. Throughout my stay they took their training seriously and learned quickly. However, they have no spare parts for their weapons and little in the way of maintenance equipment. Cleaning rods and pipe cleaners were dispensed for the first time to these men during my training session. They have no bore brushes or bore cleaner. I found many rifles with lubricant in the gas system. Nor had they ever been instructed to stagger the three bolt-ring gaps to inhibit gas loss.

The following day I went to visit the helicopter squadron. Their M60-D guns are as beat up as the H-series Hueys they are mounted on. Both guns were down on the first Huey I inspected — failure to extract,



SOF Military Small Arms Editor Peter Kokalis discusses operational use of M60 with El Salvador Airborne Battalion helicopter doorunner at Ilopango Airbase. Photo: Jim Fisher

the doorgunners told me. Small wonder. Although there were no broken parts, the guns were badly fouled. The gas plugs had never been removed after the birds arrived in-country. The pistons had severe carbon and copper-wash buildup. I found the usual chips on the bolt lugs and cleaned them up with a swiss file. The operating rods had already been filed.

The D-gunners had never detail-stripped the guns before. It wouldn't have done them much good anyway, as they have no cleaning equipment on board of any kind. I reassembled the guns, instructing them not to lubricate the gas systems, and safety-wired the gas plugs and key washers.

Drifting over to the aircraft-armament-repair shed, where I hoped to uncover explanations for the wretched condition of the M60-Ds, my feelings of desperation were only heightened. When I walked in they were in the process of cleaning an M60 barrel in a dirty, oily solvent without removal of the gas piston.

The chief armorer explained that they have no TMs of any kind on the M60. Everything they know was picked up through disassembly of the guns by trial and error. They have no spare parts, such as the much-needed driving springs (all that I examined

had flat spots), bolt assemblies or operating rods. When one of these parts breaks, that weapon is simply lost to them. They have no .30-cal. cleaning rods, bore brushes or M60 combination tools.

I examined a GAU-2A1B mini-gun in caliber 7.62mm NATO which had been cleaned along with its electric motor by immersion in engine oil. They are missing the following parts for this weapon system: shields for the aft ball bearings, head bolts, subassemblies, barrels, bolt parts, tools and all lubricants necessary for maintenance. These parts were ordered from the U.S. government in July 1982. Nothing has been received to date!

My thoughts were jarred back to the present by the deafening roar of cadence as the Atlacatl marched off to an inner compound. Intrigued by their warrior elan, I trailed after them and arrived to find one of the machine gunners tugging repeatedly on the retracting handle of his M60. The bolt would not stay open because he had assembled the sear backwards.

I removed the trigger group and corrected his error, showing him what he had done wrong. In passing, I reflected on the design defect that allows the M60 to be assembled with the sear reversed. They just don't make

them like they used to, John Browning.

Sensing they needed help, I hustled up one of their Ma Deuces and four M60s, along with their respective crews, and proceeded to tear the guns apart in the courtyard. The M2 HB, in fairly good shape, was an old WWII AC Spark Plug, rebuilt and upgraded. But the crew had never seen headspace and timing gauges or disassembled the bolt group.

The M60s were appalling. All were very old — one carried serial number 45,484. Its retracting handle had been brazed back on. Another had a cracked receiver that had been welded. Still, they were cleaner than the M60-Ds and the crews were fairly familiar with disassembly procedures, although they had never field-stripped the feed mechanism. They also have no cleaning rods, bore brushes, bore solvent, broken-case extractors, patches or combination tools. Several guns had oil in the gas system.

As always, the men watched intently, were highly motivated and quick to learn. The Atlacatl and I would meet again.

I spent the next two days with the AA battery, training recruits with the M16A1 and M60. The firing range was covered with an eight-inch layer of talc-like silt which swirled about with the slightest provocation until I swam in dust and constant sweat: These live-fire exercises are not my fondest memory of El Salvador.

The M60s bummed out again. The actuator roller sheared off the bolt on one gun and two others were missing bolt pins, causing the bolt plug to unscrew every 50 rounds or so. The result was a great deal of down time. I found one soldier carrying a 100-rd. non-disintegrating belt for the HK 21. I had their sergeant explain that it could not be used in the M60.

My final day with them was taken up by maintenance and repair. With a few parts liberated from the aircraft-armament-repair shed, I managed to get all the M60s cranking again.

That evening 1st Lt. David Koch of the Atlacatl Battalion stopped by the hotel to ask if I could drive out in the morning and help him with *Las Cincuentas*, as they call the .50-cal. Browning M2 HB. He promised to show me some rare Danish Madsen-Saetter LMGs they had. How could I refuse?

With 40 men assembled and Koch as interpreter, I demonstrated the use of the headspace and timing gauges, which they had never seen before. I made every man headspace and time a gun. They made few mistakes.

I presented Koch with a set of gauges for every Ma Deuce in the battalion. One of these guns was completely out of time and had been carried, totally inoperable, on all their missions — 128 pounds of useless steel! You'd better believe it will wax some Gees now. However, two of the battalion's

THE CUBAN CONNECTION

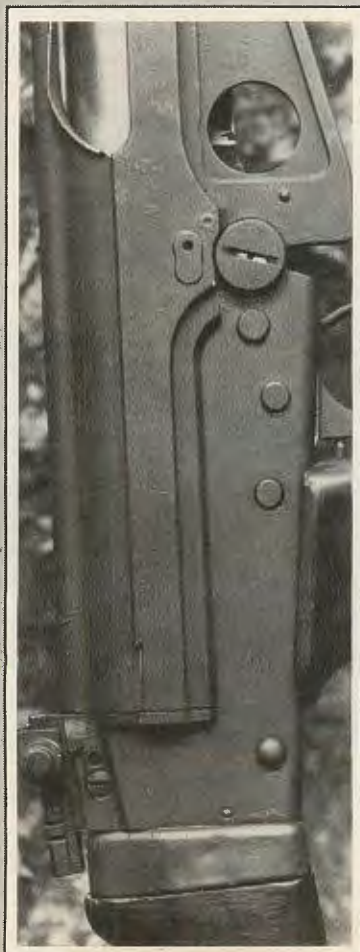
by Peter G. Kokalis

Rumors filtering up from El Salvador have made note of a previously unknown variant of the FN/FAL rifle with a mysterious hole in its side, in service with the communist guerrillas. What is it? While working with the Atlacatl Battalion I had the opportunity to examine one closely. The hole, slightly larger than a 25-cent piece, had been cut by an end mill through the right side of the upper receiver's magazine well.

The hole is a subterfuge since it has merely removed the Cuban coat-of-arms: the national emblem marked underneath with "EJERCITO DE CUBA" (Army of Cuba). Both standard and heavy-barrel models of the FAL were ordered from FN by the Castro regime in 1958. Deliveries commenced in 1959.

The standard models were equipped with the long U.S.-style flash hider and bayonet. All were selective-fire. The specimen I examined was a standard model. The barrel had been chopped back by about six inches and the flash hider reinstalled. The entire rifle had been repainted, light green on the metal surfaces and black on the wood furniture.

Not too clever, Fidel: You forgot to remove the serial numbers, asshole.



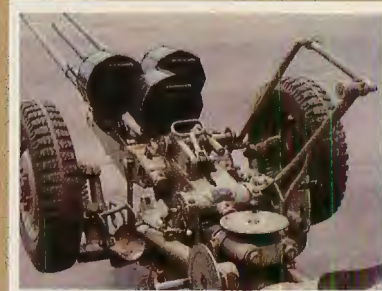


ABOVE: In the classroom and the field, SOF Military Small Arms Editor Peter G. Kokalis tirelessly trained troops and inspected the small arms of Salvadoran armed forces. Photos: Jim Fisher **LEFT:** M60 gunners were also trained by Kokalis, but performance was still hampered by age and wear on weapons, suggested by black anodizing worn off now-silver feed covers. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis **BELOW:** Graduation: Kokalis poses with Atlacatl class-members from his SOF-sponsored M2 HB and M60 instruction course. Photo: Robert K. Brown





TOP: SOF Military Small Arms Editor gives M2HB live-fire demo to Atlacatl gunners. Photo: Ralph Edens **ABOVE:** "Go, no go!" Atlacatl Bn. troops learn headspace gauging. Photo: Robert K. Brown **BELOW:** Like most Salvadoran equipment, web gear is old and worn out. Photo: Ralph Edens



PERIMETER DEFENSE AT ILOPANGO AIRPORT

by Peter G. Kokalis

In service with the Air Force of El Salvador, the Yugoslav 20mm M-55 anti-aircraft gun is in essence three Hispano-Suiza HSS-804 20mm guns mounted on the HSS 630-3 towed carriage. The entire system is manufactured under license from Hispano-Suiza of Switzerland.

While the Salvos have several of these units mounted on tracked APCs, the majority of their M-55s are of the towed variety. The towed model is more useful in a perimeter-defense role as its barrels can be deflected to slightly below horizontal: an important consideration, as the Gees have no air force. These weapons would be best utilized if deployed from fixed fire bases. At present they are not. I found the Salvos to be well schooled in the M-55's operation, but not in its correct employment.

The M-55 can be fired with its wheels in the travelling position, but it is most

effective if the wheels are raised off the ground and the carriage (which has no armor-plate shield) supported on the three outriggers, one in the front and two in the rear.

Each of the three guns carries a 60-round drum magazine. The barrel length is 77 inches. Muzzle velocity is approximately 2,755 fps. The AP round will penetrate 18mm of armor-plate at 500 meters. The types of ammunition include API, API-T, HEI, HEI-T and practice. The barrels can be elevated 83 degrees above horizontal and depressed five degrees below horizontal. Traverse is a continuous 360 degrees. The cyclic rate is about 750 rpm and the guns can be fired semiautomatic or full-auto. The M-55 is fitted with an optical/mechanical sight. Operated by a crew of six, the maximum horizontal range is 6,200 yards. The maximum vertical range is 4,900 yards.

Though certainly not the most useful armament in their inventory at the present level of fighting, the M-55, if employed properly, would be suitable for repelling any ground assault mounted against Ilopango Airport.



THE MADSEN-SAETTER GPMG: SPREADING THE DOG TOO THIN

by Peter G. Kokalis

The well-known firm of Dansk Industri Syndikat manufactured their first machine gun at the beginning of the 20th century. They ceased production of firearms in 1970. Their last effort was the ill-fated Madsen-Saetter GPMG introduced in the 1950s.

This gun is gas-operated, fires from the open bolt and incorporates a locking system reminiscent of the Soviet RPD. Two wedges on each side of the bolt are forced outward into recesses in the receiver. Like the RPD, it is unfortunately possible to assemble and fire the weapon with these wedges missing.

The Madsen-Saetter was offered in a variety of calibers from 6.5mm to 8mm. Those purchased by El Salvador are chambered for caliber .30-06. The feed system is that of the MG 42 and 50-round non-disintegrating Gurt 33 type belts are used. Changes in caliber are accommodated by switching barrels and bolts, when necessary. The bore and chamber are chrome-plated and the barrel has radial cooling fins at the chamber

end. It is of the quick-change type. The bipod is mounted at the rear end of the gas regulator in a good compromise position. The cyclic rate is adjustable from 650 to 1,000 rpm.

Simplicity of manufacture was stressed. Most of the gun was fabricated by stamping, turning and precision-casting techniques. It was well-made. But the Madsen-Saetter is only marginally reliable and was totally overshadowed by the far superior FN MAG which was introduced during the same time frame.

Who was responsible for siccing this dog on the Salvos? Since it was made in limited numbers at the Bandung Arsenal in Indonesia, which provided El Salvador with a large quantity of refurbished G3s, that is the most likely point of origin. Dumped on them as part of the package most likely.

In any event, they have placed a few in each battalion, an improper disbursement, in my opinion. All the Madsen-Saetter GPMGs in inventory should be issued to a single unit in which men could be trained in their use and maintenance. Ammunition logistics would be simplified and repairs effected by the necessary robbing of parts. As it stands, these guns remain as curios in battalion armories. At the very least, they're in much better condition than the M60s we sent them.

Ma Deuces are missing T&E mechanisms and another lacks feed-mechanism parts.

In the afternoon we commenced live-fire exercises. They had never been taught to use the sights or the T&E mechanism. After demonstrating the use of the bolt latch for single-shot zeroing, Koch and I instructed the gunners to fire short bursts. Starting at 300 meters to build their confidence, the men fired accurately and with great exuberance. If only we can increase the training these courageous people need so desperately.

That evening we cleaned the *cincuentas*, but of course they have no .50-caliber bore bushes or rods, or ruptured-case extractors. When a case splits (usually due to improper headspace), the barrel must be sent back to the central armory.

The next day I returned to the Atlacatl to work with the M60 crews. Six men were carrying belts of improperly linked ammo. Their ass-chewing was of the appropriate volume and intensity, albeit in a language I do not fully understand. They had been taught to fire this weapon only in the prone position off the bipod. I made them go into the bush and bring logs up to the firing line. With the bipod closed and the forearm resting on a log or sandbag, flanking targets can be quickly engaged. I also taught them the marginally useful kneeling and hip assault positions.

I instructed the assistant gunners to spot rounds and call out their corrections to the gunners. The men were splendid in every way, but the aging guns failed once more. Two refused to extract. The retracting handle broke off one while the gunner attempted to free the bolt. Two more experienced frequent stoppages and one ran away while I was demonstrating the kneeling position, knocking me on my ass. They were too polite to laugh, very much anyway.

On my last working day I took the D-gunners up over Lake Ilopango, teaching them lead techniques while firing at floating plastic bags of styrofoam. The left-side gun failed completely after two rounds.

Why have we issued El Salvador equipment in such deplorable condition, without spare parts, maintenance tools or proper training? Hell, I don't know. I left San Salvador filled with deep shame and remorse over my country's response to their plight. Tactics and strategy will all go for naught if the infantry's weapons will not function.

Amid the jungle trails and Mayan ruins, as elsewhere, war still remains a matter of close encounters of the fatal kind. Since the Atlacatl Battalion's inception on 1 March 1982, 86 of its brave men have met their fate in battle. How many died as a consequence of faulty equipment and lack of training?

While forever attracted to its implements, god, how I loathe war. And yet . . . no wine gives fiercer intoxication, no drug more vivid exaltation. ☘

SOF IN ACTION

With El Salvador's Airborne Battalion

by Alex McColl



Peder Lund, President of Paladin Press and Vietnam veteran, advances to help M60 gunner. Lund spent three days in field. Photo: Ralph Edens

EDITOR'S NOTE: During SOF's training/evaluation mission, a team consisting of John Early, Alex McColl, Ralph Edens and Peder Lund accompanied the Airborne Battalion on its first combat operation as a battalion. A U.S. Army Mobile Training Team had completed its training of the battalion only two weeks earlier. However, two of the esquadron (companies) had participated in operations the preceding months. Early, McColl and Edens spent 24 hours in the field. Lund remained an additional 48 hours.

I hadn't heard the sounds in a long time, but one never forgets them. Shots, automatic-weapons fire, the sudden, unmistakable, vicious sound of live contact, in this case about 400 meters to the right.

Lt. Lopez-Torres, an *esquadron* (company) commander of El Salvador's Airborne Battalion, immediately contacted the platoon engaged on his right via his PRC-77 radio.

The troops around SOF's observation team busily began collecting their weapons, including an M60 machine gun and a 90mm recoilless rifle, and moved quickly out toward the firing. The SOF team went with them. None of us was armed with anything heavier than a pocket knife, but we figured that we would be able to pick something up from either dead or wounded. Or both if necessary and if it got that bad.

Our group moved out along a tree line between open fields into the edge of some scrub jungle, where the troops set up a blocking position covering a sunken road.

In the jungle to the front, single shots and an occasional burst of automatic weapons fire continued.

A Salvadoran soldier behind an M60 fired a couple of short bursts, then caught himself and remembered fire discipline. He ceased fire, waiting for a **visible target**.

After about 40 minutes of sporadic firing, it became apparent that the government troops were not in contact with a large guerrilla force but a smaller group—which was now mainly interested in getting the hell out of there.



After this small — but at first sharp — fire fight broke out, the muted thump of a mortar, fired some distance from us, echoed, and in a few moments we heard the louder *crump* of an incoming round in the enemy's general direction. Four more followed but we never did learn what, if any, effect they had.

After about one hour in all, the firing died away entirely and officers began assessing the little engagement.

A small group of guerrillas, apparently trying to elude a search sweep to the west, had stumbled into part of Lt. Lopez-Torres *esquadron* — as a matter of fact right into an M60 position where an SOF team member happened to be located. Before the fire fight the gunner had been trying to replace the sear in backwards but got it into the correct position upon advice from the SOFer. The gunner killed two guerrillas.

A third guerrilla was killed during pursuit by Salvadoran soldiers.

Loot included two M16s whose configurations and serial numbers identified them as those left behind by or captured from American forces in Vietnam. Most everyone knows by now that Vietnam serves as an arms warehouse for Marxist wars around the world.

The purpose of the SOF visit to El Salvador was to evaluate and comment upon effectiveness of its Airborne Battalion. The

Soldier of Fortune Contributing Editor Ralph Edens (left), a soldier from El Salvador's Airborne Battalion and Paladin Press Publisher Peder Lund (right) examine M16s taken from two guerrillas killed on an operation SOF observed in April.

Photo: Alex McColl

Airborne gunner shortly after he blew away two Gs. SOF team member gets half-point, since he instructed gunner to reposition reversed sear in chopped-barrel M60.

Photo: Ralph Edens



battalion, incidentally, is part of the Salvadoran Air Force rather than the Army, since the Salvadoran high command has found it more efficient to collocate the two units for faster reaction to the needs of the battalion on the ground, avoiding a complex chain of command.

We had arrived at the battalion's location the day before on a resupply Huey and were met by Lt. Lopez-Torres, who at 23, has had plenty of experience in the field after two years of leading an elite unit against communist insurgents.

The area was relatively flat with some scrub jungle and burned-over, abandoned fields. The weather was bright, dry — hot and stuffy — at midday, with a smoky haze from the burned fields.

Basic small arms for this company were: two M60s, two 90mm recoilless rifles, several M79 bloop tubes and M16s.

After our return to San Salvador, the capital, the four of us held a debriefing and wrote an after-action report for Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown.

Our findings and conclusions include:

- *Escuadron* command post (CP) well-concealed with adequate access.
- Officers and troops receptive to suggestions. After SOF advice about cleaning machine guns and other heavy weapons, the troops quickly cleaned their weapons.

EL SALVADOR

- Light and noise discipline in CP excellent. Elsewhere it varied from excellent to weak.
- The unit medic appeared to be aggressive, intelligent and competent.
- Fine radio discipline; no unnecessary chatter, frequencies changed every four hours.
- Troops reacted aggressively to hostile contact. Without this, everything else is a lost cause; with it, there is hope.
- Good fire discipline during contact.
- The battalion commander's operation order to his commanders was thorough, clear, adequately detailed and professional. It included instructions not to shoot civilians, not to destroy property unless necessary to subdue enemy forces. There was special mention of one group of very old hacienda buildings which are an historical monument.

Opportunities for Improvement:

A. Weapons and Equipment:

- Unit had only one night-vision device mounted on an M16. It was dirty and needed repair and adjustment.
- M60 machine guns observed were all old. Some were also very dirty. There were no cleaning rods, bore brushes, bore cleaner, M60 combination tools or other proper cleaning materials available, only some rags and "3-in-1"™ oil.
- Machine guns and other heavier weapons need permanently assigned gunners, who are thoroughly trained in their care and use.
- One M60 machine gun was misassembled (sear in backwards).
- Machine-gunners were carrying ammunition belts uncovered, draped over their shoulders "bandit style," not in the issued cardboard and canvas boxes. This not only dirties the ammunition, causing malfunctions, but its bright brass is visible to the enemy.
- Except on M60 machine guns, slings are unnecessary, and merely encourage bad weapons-carrying habits, especially with M16s.
- For this type of operation the 90mm recoilless rifle is unduly heavy and bulky (as is its ammunition). Unless there is an armor threat, it is better to carry another 60mm mortar and its ammunition or a litter for the immobilization of wounded soldiers with possible neck or back injuries for transportation.
- The unit had no Claymore mines or sandbags.

B. Tactics and Field Procedures:

- The restriction on U.S. advisers going into the field with Salvadoran units is harmful.
- *Escuadron* and platoon CPs were under obvious landmarks (large trees) and too far from the center of mass of their units.
- Smoke was not used to mark the helicopter LZ.
- Units use strips of colored ribbon, changed every three days, as a field recognition device, rather than a system of chal-



ABOVE: Maj. Turcios, Airborne Bn. Co, examines captured M16. Airborne officers showed aggressive professionalism. BELOW: Early (left) and Lund look for targets. SOF team observed U.S.-trained units in combat, but — of course — American military advisers are restricted from the field. Photos: Ralph Edens



lenge and password, changed every day, for better security.

- In the blocking position the unit had a "Z"-shaped alignment, which increased the risk of firing on their own troops.
- Siting, construction and concealment of individual and weapons positions was uneven between platoons, indicating a lack of company-level supervision. Troops used pieces of volcanic rock in their positions, thus increasing the risk of injury from flying rock chips.
- One platoon bunched up and had very poor discipline in daytime, indicating a lack of company-level supervision.
- CP and other elements occupied the same positions at night as in the daytime.
- M79 grenadiers should be issued pistols, not M16s.

- There were no last-light or first-light stand-tos or clearing patrols around the unit position.

- There was considerable noise and milling around during personnel *change on night* guard and ambush positions, except at the unit CP. A better procedure is two-man night-security posts, with 50-percent alert and change without movement and little noise.

- Unsatisfactory area policing and field sanitation. Empty cans, paper and plastic bags, and other litter were *everywhere*. The troops defecated close to their positions and did not cover up. This is a hazard to troop health and provides information to the enemy.

- During the contact, due to a dead radio battery, there was no communication

among the platoons. If the enemy force had been larger, this could have led to serious trouble.

- The dead guerrillas were searched but neither photographed nor fingerprinted for identification. No effort was made to set up an ambush over their bodies to take in whoever came by to collect them.

- Apparently no use is made of stay-behind reconnaissance teams in the area after sweep operations.

- Unit bunched up by platoons in the open while getting organized for a foot march to a new assembly area, making an excellent target for mortar attack.

- On the march, there was no flank security nor use of terrain for maximum cover and concealment.

- Link-up procedures between units need improvement. At one point on the march shots were exchanged with a friendly unit.

- Need for standardized training procedures and standards — as the above actions illustrate — and the sort of detailed supervision for which NCOs (either Salvadoran or U.S. advisers) exist.

- Practice of not taking prisoners and lack of civic-action/Chieu Hoi/win-hearts-and-minds programs, i.e., disregard for the intelligence and political-warfare aspects, seriously detract from the effort.

- Optimum employment of the Airborne Battalion in this environment would be as a single- or multiple-company strike force that reacted aggressively to intelligence generated by reconnaissance teams or others, attacking located enemy units and base camps, rather than as another infantry battalion.

- Tactical intelligence collection by Salvadoran units is limited, and distribution worse.

- Fear of ambush overstated; for major convoys, the anti-ambush procedures used by U.S. forces in Vietnam are effective.

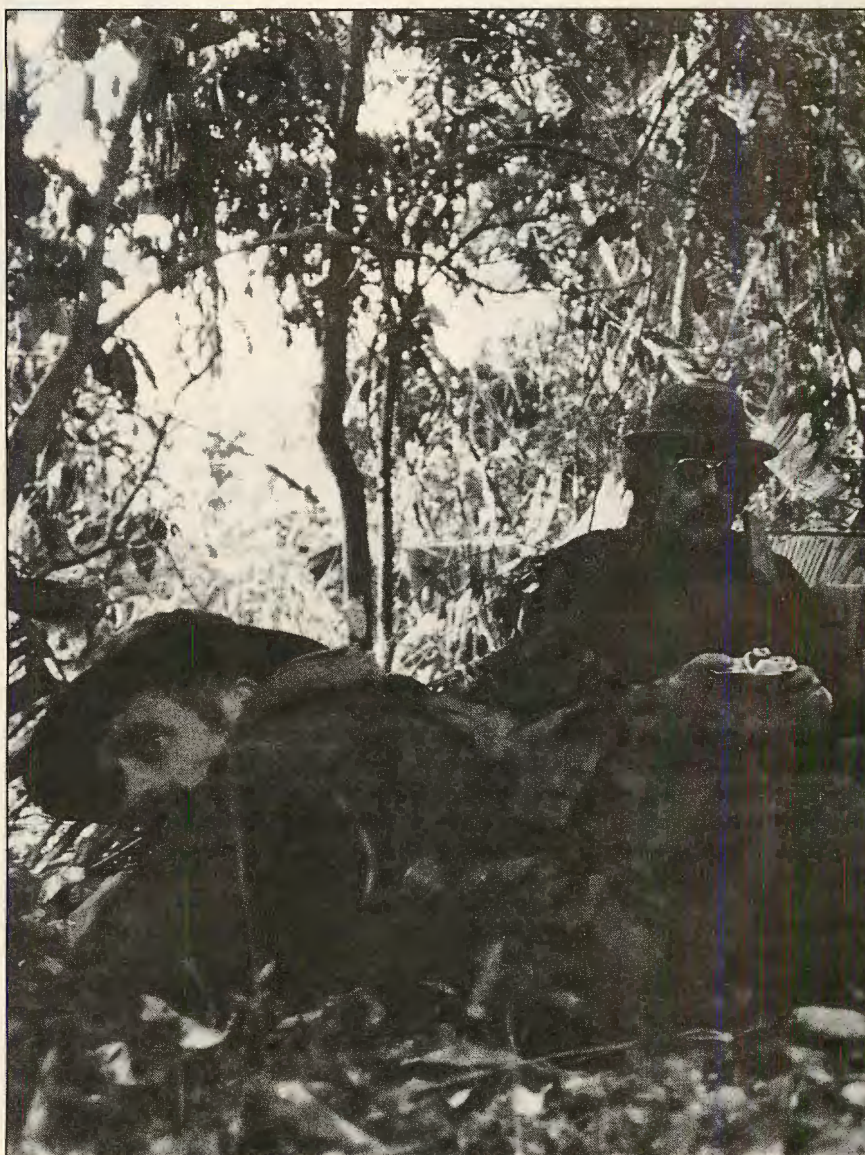
- There is no central logistics distribution system. Each sub-unit is responsible for its own logistics; each lieutenant buys the food for his unit for each operation. This means that each operation is inevitably compromised the day before when its leader buys rations in the civilian community.

- Other needs: more maps in units, a tracker element and smaller, cheaper, tactical-unit radios, for communication between platoon and squad leaders.

- The unit SOF accompanied sought to hold too much ground: Three officers and 133 EM were spread across 1.5 kilometers.

- As a blocking force, the unit could have been easily penetrated through gaps between squads and platoons. The guerrillas who were killed had passed through the perimeter and were shot behind the blocking force.

- Poor distribution of ammunition, especially for the 60mm mortar and 90mm recoilless rifle, whose ammo was scattered throughout the troops rather than concen-



SOF staffer Ralph Edens checks direction of enemy movement while John Early prepares for next picture.

trated with the weapon.

- No shift from day to night positions; secondary positions not used.

- Unit needs more and better medics. The single corpsman for a company-sized unit would be overwhelmed in any heavy contact.

- Operations schematics are printed directly on maps. This is wasteful of maps and, if the map is captured, can give the enemy valuable intelligence information.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The battalion commander and his officers are competent professionals and the soldiers are willing and eager to learn and improve. They are aggressive and disciplined. They deserve and can make effective use of all available help to work on improvement to correct the above-listed weaknesses. The battalion could become an effective air-inserted strike force.

Time and resources for the type of massive population-and-resources-control/hamlet-defense effort, as used in Vietnam, do not exist in El Salvador. When too weak to defend, attack. In El Salvador, the obvious elements of the plan are:

- Target acquisition, using all-source intelligence (especially informants and information from the people), radio interception and direction-finding, infrared (if available) — and reconnaissance teams for a final check on the location, size and description of the target;

- Target elimination by tactical air strike followed by helicopter or parachute-inserted ground strike forces against enemy units and base camps. This is the correct method for employing an airborne battalion. ㄨ

A grenade, as Mr. Webster will confirm, is a small missile containing an explosive or chemical agent that's thrown by hand or projected by rifle. To a soldier, it's a useful tool of the trade in turf disputes.

I decided to write an article on grenades after a discussion I had in 1981 in Beirut. A friend of mine, a member of the Lebanese Forces, who I'll call Joe, and I were talking about the ingenuity of grenade designs from several different countries. Joe pulled out a Soviet F1 grenade from his web gear. The lower portion of the grenade looked rather similar to our Mark II of WWI through Vietnam fame, but the fuse was somewhat different. I had never seen the real thing, but was prepared to continue the discussion based on my knowledge of the U.S. Army TM 31-200-1, *Unconventional Warfare Devices and Techniques Reference*, one of the handy-dandy guides I take with me to wars.

Flipping to page 160, I read that the F1 fuse takes from three to five seconds to do the deed. So I was rather taken aback when Joe informed me the fuse time was really zero to 13 seconds, depending on the individual grenade. Having a zero-second grenade when you believed you had a three- to five-second one could spoil your whole day. He gave me a five-second grenade (a *confirmed* one) to carry around. I try to obey the law and not carry a gun, but a grenade seemed different — besides, it would really discourage someone from following or harassing you (sort of psy. ops. with a bang).

A few days later Joe and I went up to the mountains around Beirut and he showed me another surprise feature of the Soviet F1 grenade. Loosening up to throw some, I felt rather confident, having been on both ends of grenades in Vietnam. I selected a target, thought of the IRS and ATF folks at home, pulled the pin — so far so good — and raised my arm to let the spoon fly behind me.

As I let go of the spoon, I heard a noise so loud I almost dropped the grenade. This noise was not in the book, either. Declining any more grenades, I asked around and learned that this was normal for the Soviet F1. *The fact is if I had a dollar for each time I heard, "That noise saved my life" from a prospective target, I could fill a foot locker.*

The Lebanese Forces train their fighters to identify the sound of the F1 being armed. The sound is so loud that it can be heard easily by anyone within throwing range, and, once heard, it is a sound not easily forgotten.

I wanted to take home a few samples of the F1, so I asked my good friend where I might get a few. No problem. Off we went to the green line, where the Christians faced the PLO and the Syrians at no more than 100 meters with cocked weapons at the ready. I knew that the Christians did not have an overabundance of ammunition to give away to every visitor. In fact, I found out that a great many of these non-salaried young men and women had purchased their own arms and equipment, so I offered to pay for my grenades. I asked how much each cost and

FUSE SURPRISE

SOF's Dring Discovers Russian Grenade Secret

by Larry Dring

was told \$6. Not bad, I thought, and nodded to indicate my acceptance.

To my surprise, Joe began yelling something in Arabic across the no-man's line, and soon a Syrian soldier came over the green line, carrying my three grenades. I paid him \$18 and was told that I could buy an RPG-7 rocket round for \$25, which I declined. U.S. customs has no sense of humor about things like that and I had no idea at the time how to make one inert.

Upon closer examination, I found that I had a zero-, a four- and an eight-second grenade, none of which were mentioned in the TM. I thought about taking the three live grenades through customs, showing the officials the TM and explaining that since such grenades didn't exist, they couldn't be illegal — but why press your luck, even if your nickname is "Lucky Larry"?

Joe and I had no problem popping the four- and eight-second grenade fuses, but firing the zero-second one takes some talent if you want to retrieve all the parts and keep all of your fingers. I was lucky. Once the fuse was inert, I sat on the veranda, feet propped up on the wall, with screw driver in hand, and began scraping the TNT filler. Just then, two Israeli jets broke the sound barrier overhead. After recovering from the shock, I finished the job and had holes bored in the side to complete the inerting process.

When I returned to the United States with my newly found knowledge about F1s, no one seemed interested, except the people at SOF, who sent me to Phoenix to visit with Peter Kokalis, their military small-arms editor (see "The Gift," on p. 75).

Back in Beirut and determined to find out as much about the Soviet F1 grenades as possible, I managed to maneuver myself into the middle of an ammo dump. Happily, I rummaged through dozens of boxes, crates and tins. The soldier in charge of the dump watched me nervously; I don't think he was comfortable being in an ammo-filled room with someone who fondled grenades so lovingly. The neglected pile of Israeli grenades, which resemble the old U.S. WWII pineapples, attested to the high dud rate of that type of grenade. If you ever have the chance to throw one of these — don't.

At last I came upon crates of Soviet F1s, all banded and unopened. Gloating, I opened crates that Ivan had so carefully

sealed. The first thing I noticed was the neatly sealed packing lists, one in Russian and the other, more or less, in English. There were even directions for using the Soviet type P38 can opener. I couldn't believe it took written instructions to use a can opener. If a Russian couldn't figure out how to use it, he probably couldn't read.

After opening several crates, I found two distinct types of F1s: the older one, which is in TM and *Jane's Infantry Weapons '83*, and a newer version, which is in neither. The older one is mustard-colored, while the newer one is olive drab. The newer one has more sharply defined features, but the principal difference is in the shape of the fuse itself. The new ones are similar in appearance to the standard U.S. grenade fuse.

Soviet F1 grenades come in boxes of 25 with neat dividers for each grenade. They are all unfused with a plastic shipping plug in them and wrapped in oil paper. The time delay is from zero to 13, depending on the individual fuse. The fuse time is stamped or painted on each fuse, just below the threading that screws it into the grenade. In the newer boxes, fuses come in two circular tins marked "4" and "6" respectively. There is, however, one 0 fuse in each tin. As Gomer Pyle would say, "Surprise. Surprise. Surprise."

Normally, the Christian Forces mark their spoons with the time delay, using a magic marker. However, there is only one way to know definitely what the fuse time of a Soviet F1 grenade is: Unscrew the fuse and check the grenade. Why help the other side with their body count?

By experimenting, I discovered that a Soviet F1 fuse can be used in a French grenade. Due to the thickness of the cap, however, the French fuse would not fit into the Russian grenade. And, yes, the fuse from the U.S. MK II pineapple and the M26 works in the F1 and vice versa. It makes you wonder what else fits.

Peter Kokalis, who recently returned from an assignment in El Salvador, asked for an inert F1 to bring back with him. His Salvadoran companion, a lieutenant, took the F1 from his harness and gave it to an NCO to make inert. You can imagine the lieutenant's surprise when he found the grenade he had been carrying around had a zero-second fuse, not a three- to five-second



Varying fuses found on F1 grenade range from zero to 13 seconds.

one. Every grenade was then examined to avoid unpleasant surprises. Kokalis had saved men's lives and reinforced what I had been saying all along. I no longer felt like John the Baptist crying in the wilderness. If only somebody else in the United States would listen.

To complete my Lebanese grenade lessons, I also learned a new way to throw grenades. Since most of the fighting in Lebanon is in the cities, the Lebanese have developed a technique for grenade throwing in populated areas. On an open volleyball court one can throw a grenade any way one wants, but at night in a strange alley or building, awareness of obstructions to the throwing arm becomes critical. Weapons are usually carried on slings around the neck. In house-to-house, hand-to-hand combat, the enemy cannot take it away, and a soldier can drop his weapon and stretch well forward to throw a grenade.

To throw a grenade in the new manner taught to me: First, grasp the grenade with your right hand; insert your left thumb through the grenade ring and pull out. As you straighten your arms, move upward and out, sweeping the area in front of you to locate any obstructions. If there are none, put your arm to the rear and throw the grenade. It is an easy, simple maneuver to learn and it sure beats dropping a hot grenade at your feet.

Another trick of the trade in clearing rooms that may or may not be occupied is to throw a grenade *with* the pin in it into the room and wait for the occupants to disperse. Why waste a grenade? It pays to have one around when you need it.

Of course, if you know the room is occupied, pull the pin and totally redecorate the interior.

The Soviet F1 grenade offers surprises to the uninformed or unwary. In every operation in which "You bet your life," be sure. Check the grenade to make sure how much time you have to play with. The life you save may be your own. ☒

THE GIFT

by Peter G. Kokalis

You can always count on Larry Dring to provide some new and fascinating tidbit about warfare's devilish devices. Larry stopped by several weeks prior to my departure for El Salvador (see "Arming El Salvador," p. 64). He was on the way home from his most recent ventures onto the armament slag piles of Beirut. He had several hundred military cartridges in his rucksack and needed a little help in identifying them. I was happy to assist for the appropriate compensation — one specimen each of everything I didn't have already.



Soviet WW-II era F1 grenade with zero-second fuse used in El Salvador. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

Finishing this task, Dring pulled a Soviet F1 grenade body from his pack and threw it, along with several inert fuses, into my lap. "Know anything about these?" he asked.

"No more than I have to, I guess. Cast-iron body, WWII vintage, uneven breakup, 40-meter casualty radius, about 1½ ounces of TNT filler and a four-second delay."

"Well," he said, "I've discovered something interesting about the fuses. They're available in different time delays, from 13 seconds down to zero de-

lay. The delay time is marked on the fuse's detonator body inside the grenade and you have to pull out the fuse to check the number. If it's marked '0' it will detonate when you release the spoon. Probably designed for rigging booby traps."

"Nasty," I said, and we drifted on to other topics.

While in the field with the Atlacatl Battalion, I noticed several officers were carrying F1 grenades captured from the Gees (guerrillas). Back at the BOQ, I told 1st Lt. David Koch, an Atlacatl company commander who had become a close friend, that I had always wanted one for my collection.

"I'll give you the one I carry on our operations," he said.

"Fine, David, but first have someone inert it. I can't take a live grenade back to the States."

The next evening Koch came by the hotel to pick me up for dinner with his family.

"I've got your grenade, Peter."

"Did you have someone detonate the fuse?"

"Yes, one of the *sargentos*."

"By the way, do you know about the different time delays on these F1 fuses?"

"No, what do you mean?"

"Here, let me show you." As I passed on the information Dring had given me, I unscrewed the fuse from the body. You already know how it was marked. We both stared at the zero stamped on the fuse and then long and hard at each other. No words passed between us. Of such things are the warrior's bonds to his comrades forged.

"Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Luke 6:38.

(Editor's Note: After this incident, a memo was sent to all Salvadoran officers, telling them to check the time delay on all F1 grenades before using them.)

Staffers Test Selous Scout Techniques

CONVENTION SKY SCHOOL PREVIEW

by John Metzger



ABOVE: Jumpmaster Jim Isom looks on as Guthrie exits Cessna 206 over New Mexico. Photo: Jim Fisher. **LEFT:** Guthrie looked good under T-10 canopy. The problem is that short stop at the bottom. Photo: John Metzger. **RIGHT:** Guthrie sings "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" before his first jump as Metzger coolly covers his reserve. Photo: Jim Fisher. **LOWER LEFT:** "No, Bill. That's not how to pack your parachute," says jump-school owner John Early. Photo: John Metzger. **BELOW:** After PLF, Metzger runs to collapse canopy on Albuquerque Parachute Center drop zone. Photo: Jim Fisher



WHEN the Selous Scouts located a large terrorist concentration during the Rhodesian Civil War, they would call in their version of a rapid deployment force. After a fire-force briefing, the standard RDF procedure was to pack 25 paratroopers into a DC-3 and fly them to the target area, usually accompanied by one or more helicopters. Once over target, the airborne troops would leap right on top of the terrors to initiate contact. What followed was a military version of a free-for-all.

Sound like fun? *Soldier of Fortune* thought so, and decided to simulate the Rhodesian jump and air-assault rapid-deployment technique for parachutists at our 1983 convention. And we found just the guy to run the show: John Early, former chief HALO instructor at the Rhodesian Army parachute school.

Early — founder and owner of the Albuquerque Parachute Center — will jump-train SOF conventioners at SOF's Fourth Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nev., on the 6th and 7th of October 1983. With 4,073 jumps as of this writing (only 28 people in the United States have over 4,000), Early is more than qualified to get first-timers as well as experienced jumpers safely out the door.

Aside from his Rhodesian parachuting experience in the mid-'70s (which culminated in his recruitment as chief airborne adviser to Gen. Peter Walls' Rhodesian Army airborne program and as commander of the Selous Scouts' Airborne Strike Force), Early has won jumpmaster wings from the United States, Britain, Vietnam, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Panama, Peru, Argentina, South Africa, Belgium, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, France — and he occasionally wears a set of Laotian wings he stripped from a kill during the Vietnam War.

Before his African experience, Early spent almost five of his 12 years as a Green Beret in 'Nam "out-country," running recon teams into Laos and Cambodia. He worked on the U.S. Army airborne project out of Da Nang and finished up his extended tour with the Mobile Guerrilla Force in I Corps. In 1971, he was executive officer for the U.S. Army Golden Knights Parachute Team. Between 1973 and 1975, Early was an adviser attached to the 3rd Battalion of the 7th Special Forces Group, which set up basic parachute schools and HALO instruction throughout Latin America.

SOF Associate Editor Bill Guthrie and I didn't want to wait until October to jump with Early, and we thought our readers would like to know something about the airborne ops before they made the pilgrimage to Vegas. So Publisher Brown put us on a plane to Albuquerque to visit Early's school. Within the first five minutes of arriving at the parachute center, I nonchalantly mentioned my recently acquired Guatemalan wings. Early reminisced for a moment, and said, "Oh, yeah, I set up that school in '73. Right there on the coast at San Jose, isn't it?" So much for my war stories.

Early conducts ground training in a big room attached to one of Albuquerque's lar-

ger gun stores. The straightforward instruction is based on procedures Early developed when he set up the Rhodesian Army basic parachute school in 1976. First step is equipment familiarization — how to put it on, what it does and how to use it. In this instance, we used the Strong Tandem harness and container with the MC1-1 35-foot parachute and 24-foot tri-vent reserve. At the convention, however, Early will employ the T-10 system with front-mounted reserve to simulate military style as closely as possible.

Next step is getting in the plane, and what to do before jump commands are given. Early will use a DC-3 with Rhodesian camouflage in Vegas, but for regular classes in Albuquerque, the plane is a Cessna turbo 206. With the Cessna, Early teaches a modified-helicopter exit where jumpers use their left arm locked by their side as a pivot point to turn into the direction of flight upon exiting the plane.

And this is where most parachuting accidents happen: during stages of transition.

One of Early's three instructors, Jim Isom, drilled Guthrie and me on exit procedures, and the exit, arch and count sequence. Once out the door, the jumper's count is: arch-thousand, look-thousand, reach-thousand, pull-thousand, check-thousand. The arch is for flight stability, and Isom made sure we had a real spread-eagle down pat before he was satisfied — not comfortable from the "suspended agony" position. The jumper must look at his simulated right-hand rip-cord position on the second count while maintaining the arch. In reality, our 'chutes were static line, but after five, stable static-line jumps, a parachutist can try free-fall. And this is where most parachuting accidents happen: during stages of transition.

Early's five-count sequence does two things: It gives the jumper a five-second reference point before canopy check, and triggers his memory so that the rip-cord procedure won't take him by surprise on the first free-fall jump. The reach and pull counts simulate pulling the cord. The jumper assumes the arch again before the fifth and final count where he checks the canopy. If there is a malfunction (streamer, barber pole, Mae West, horseshoe, etc.), the reserve cut-away system is the self-actuating "Three-Ring Circus," which replaces the hard-to-manipulate Capewell system.

When Early and his instructors feel the student has been drilled sufficiently in exit and malfunction procedures, parachute manipulation is the next step. We were briefed on how to make the parachute run (move with the wind), hold (turn against the wind) or crab (run across the windline as if tacking in a sailboat). The training concludes with the PLF (Parachute Landing Fall).

JOHN EARLY: CONVENTION JUMPMAS- TER

Capt. John D. Early entered the United States Army in December 1962 as a private headed for Artillery OCS. Shortly after arriving at Ft. Sill, Okla., he was attracted to the subtle sales pitch of a passing Special Forces sergeant and soon found himself sweating on the fields of Ft. Benning, enduring the rigors of jump school.

In 1964, he was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group, Republic of Vietnam, where he remained for the next three and one half years, serving in B-52 (Project Delta) running recon teams and in I Corps MIKE Force, two A-teams and finally as a platoon leader for the Mobile Guerrilla Force. In 1968 he was wounded while with the MGF at the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei and returned to the United States for treatment.

Early then attended Southern Illinois University, earning a bachelor's degree in journalism and upon graduation returned to duty with the 5th SF Group in Vietnam. At the end of his tour, he was assigned to the 10th SF Group at Ft. Devens, Mass., serving on the HALO team until his transfer to the 7th Special Forces Group in Panama. He served on the 7th Group HALO team, traveling to various countries in Central and South America, establishing parachute schools and courses as part of the U.S. government military assistance program.

In 1975 he left the U.S. Army for employment overseas with the FNLA in Angola as a training officer. Upon discovering that the FNLA was not going to honor his contract, he moved on to South Africa and — eventually — Rhodesia, where he became the Chief Training Officer for HALO Operations for the Parachute Training School, Rhodesian Air Force. Early became one of the principal advisers to the Rhodesian Army during the transition of army units to airborne status. After a year with the air force, he was invited by Col. Ron Reid-Daly, officer commanding of Selous Scouts, to command the Selous Scouts Airborne Strike Force. This unit was responsible for many of the strikes against communist terrorists in neighboring Zambia and Mozambique.

After three and one half years in the Rhodesian Air Force and Army, Early returned to the United States, beginning a career as a freelance writer and occasional soldier for hire.

Early presently owns and operates the Albuquerque Parachute Center in Albuquerque, N.M., where he trains sport parachutists and other would-be adventurers.

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It was now time to soar with the eagles. We piled into Early's recovery truck and headed for Mid-Valley Airport outside Albuquerque. Guthrie and I 'chuted up, and got into the 206 with Early as pilot and Isom as jumpmaster. A 10-minute flight had us over the school's DZ near Belen, N.M.

At 3,000 feet over wide-open, high desert, I sat in the door until Isom commanded, "Go!" I was used to military-style jumping, with both hands over the reserve, so my arch wasn't quite perfect, and my direction of flight was completely off. I expected to find myself dragging behind the Cessna's tail, but looked up after my five-count and saw a familiar sight — one of the most beautiful in the world — an open canopy.

Oh, yes. I forgot to mention that this was Guthrie's first jump. He told me later that when he saw me go out, his first reaction was to frantically grab for the belay rope. But then he realized he was parachuting, not mountain climbing, and quickly regained his composure and sat in the door. Guthrie had a near-perfect exit, and as I was doing my PLF on the soft, sandy desert, another instructor, Jim Fisher, was giving Guthrie instructions over the radio (Early uses radios hooked to the jumper's harnesses for instruction — an excellent training aid especially for first-timers).

Guthrie looked like a million bucks on the way down — much like everyone looks good going up a ski lift. But he apparently had not practiced his landings well enough, because he took the full force of impact standing up, rather than dissipating the shock with a PLF. He had the wind knocked out of him and couldn't talk for about five minutes, but suffered no broken bones or serious injuries. However, he did spend the next week either standing or lying down — anything but sitting.

Isom followed us with a beautiful jump, using his custom-made square parachute, and a brisk desert wind picked up as he made a stand-up landing. We waited a bit for it to calm down, but it didn't, so we called it a day.

We left Albuquerque that night, impressed with Early and his school. Both Guthrie and I are looking forward to jumping again with Early and other SOFers in Las Vegas. Convention jumpers will be taught Rhodesian-style, and jump out the door of a Dakota — infinitely preferable to the little Cessna. Parachutists will be trained, then receive a simulated Rhodesian fire-force briefing before deployment.

Although we may not jump into a hot DZ complete with communist terrorists, it's going to be a hell of a lot of fun. Jumpers of all abilities will find Early's instruction first-rate and professional. For more information on his school, contact Early at the Albuquerque Parachute Center, 4501 Silver S.E., Albuquerque, NM 87108, phone: (505) 865-9117. Find out more about the convention on page 18. Get those convention registrations in before 25 September and we'll see you in Las Vegas.

Airborne! ✕

MOCORON

Continued from page 55

Although Mocoron is a refugee center, its inhabitants are only temporary. From there, once fed and given medical attention for two to four weeks, they are resettled at their former occupations (they are mostly small farmers and fishermen). They are welcomed by the Honduran government and, indeed, by the Hondurans themselves for much of Honduras, particularly this area along the southeastern "Mosquito" coast and interior, is underpopulated. It features uncharted bush jungle, torrid heat and steamy humidity.

But it is familiar territory to the former Nicaraguans. "It's the same climate and terrain and the same language is spoken," said Dwight Harriman, son of missionary parents who was raised in Latin America and now serves as camp director for World Relief in Mocoron. "For a relocation situation, it couldn't be more ideal. We try to place them near a small Honduran community where they meet a friendly reception because there's plenty of area to absorb them and because the Hondurans are basically a friendly, warm-hearted people."

People like Harriman and Bob Hawk, Honduras director for WR, have plenty to keep them occupied. Some 13,500 Miskitos and Indians from the smaller Sumo and Rana tribes have passed through Mocoron since last December when the Nicaraguan government started persecuting them.

About 400 had arrived at Mocoron the day before and during our visit; another 600 were located at the Honduran border town of Suhi. Others were believed on the trail from their strated villages of Santa Clara and Wisconsin — many such names as Wisconsin and Duluth are to be found in this region of Nicaragua because missionaries from the Moravian Church have worked with the Indians for many years. A Miskito spokesman in Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras, said another 700 had broken out of a Nicaraguan resettlement camp called Francia Serpe, 30 miles inside Nicaragua, last March.

Hawk estimates that WR has processed and relocated some 30 to 40 thousand Miskitos and other refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala, both suffering from Marxist-oriented revolutions similar to that which overthrew Nicaragua's loathed military dictator, Anastasio Somoza, although not enjoying the popular support the Sandinistas did.

The Miskitos told a tale of a confused 12 hours of explosions and gunfire in their villages prior to escaping via jungle trails — and said they were further fired upon by unseen forces along the way.

Maricio Molina, about 60, with leathery, deep-furrowed face and gray hair, a Moravian minister to his people at Santa Clara, said eight to 10 people were killed by what he described as a couple of attacks by one or two Nicaraguan Air Force planes. Although Molina is stooped and walks with the assist-



Two little Nicaraguan refugees smile for SOF. Old stone house in background was provided by Honduran government as temporary residence until refugee families can be relocated on small farms or find employment in Honduras. They have little hope of returning home — unless the Sandinistas are overthrown.

ance of a cane, he appeared to have endured the journey well. He stood as erect as his age permitted and did not perspire, despite a noontime temperature in excess of 100 degrees with humidity around 90. The Miskitos are hardy people of the land and most who are not sick with usual tropical diseases or wounded are given a brief physical check-up before being allocated temporary, thatched-roof, wooden homes that stand on stilts to discourage the poisonous snakes and scorpions abounding in this area.

Most of the arriving refugees appeared exhausted and in shock, but they recovered after resting, being fed and drinking purified water. A young woman nursing a baby said her 5-year-old son had been killed and she knew of others who had been injured. Another, older, woman said her sister was shot in Santa Clara and died later on the march.

A feeble, elderly man, sitting on a bunk in the infirmary, said Indian guerrillas who call themselves *Misurasata* (Council of Indians) tried to escort his party during their flight.

Most refugees fell silent when questioned about the paramilitary escort, but a Miskito spokesman back in Tegucigalpa confirmed the report.

A World Relief spokesman noted that most of the refugees were women, children or elderly men — the Indians wouldn't discuss the whereabouts of their young men. Virtually all claimed they knew of no guerrilla-government fighting that might have inspired the attack upon them.

The WR man said, "They don't talk much about their young men and we don't ask them." He added that accounts collected from the hundreds of refugees indicated that "they had been bombed, strafed and shot at, but it was sporadic rather than intensive."

This blood-letting is a new tactic for the Nicaraguans. Although Indians have been fleeing from Nicaragua to Honduras since last December, before it was simply because of land expropriation and collectivization of small businesses and shops — and because the Nicaraguans sent in Cuban "teachers" who taught a *lot more* about Marxism than they did the Three Rs. The Miskitos hate Cubans fiercely because many years ago the latter frequently raided and kidnapped them as slaves to work in sugar-cane fields on the island. Such tales have been passed down from generation to generation.

Continued on page 80

Most unusual of the refugees was Nicholas Watson, 45, an English-speaking native of Belize who had lived in Wisconsin for 14 years as a farmer. He was jailed and interrogated by the Nicaraguans as a suspected *Misurasata*. He had become separated from his wife and four children and anxiously awaited reunion with them. Indian grapevine had said they were accompanying another refugee column.

Watson remarked to SOF, "You know, I worked for Boise-Cascade Company in North Hollywood, Calif., for several years." He asked plaintively, "Why the hell did I come here?"

Watson said he had lost his passport and other papers during his flight, but had been in contact with a sister in Belize and hoped to get new ones in a couple of months. He has been in Mocoron about two months. Unlike most Miskitos, he wishes neither to return to Nicaragua nor to resettle in Honduras, but instead hopes to return home with his family to Belize and begin life all over.

A *Time* Magazine reporter joked to this writer, "Leave it to you to find the only English-speaking Miskito in this part of the world."

The Miskitos speak mostly their own language and Joe Grey, a Moravian missionary originally from Winston-Salem, N.C., who has lived and worked among the Miskitos for

26 years, served as interpreter for visiting newsmen.

Watson said about 400 others had fled the Wisconsin area, a figure confirmed by the few remaining Wisconsin victims in Mocoron. Most of the others have already been processed and resettled. They have practically forgotten about the possibility of returning home — at least as long as the Sandinistas remain in power. "They have come to believe that this may be a long, long time," said Hawk.

Watson said that most Indians in Nicaragua, who ignored politics prior to the Sandinista takeover — even Somoza didn't bother them — are now well aware of just what the Sandinistas stand for and are solidly against them.

We asked camp workers and doctors if they didn't fear a reprisal raid from nearby Nicaragua: "No, we don't think much about that, not yet anyway. There has been absolutely no indication of such a thing so far."

World Relief furnished lunch for visiting journalists and an observer from the U.S. Embassy. It was basically the same food as that fed to the refugees: red beans and rice

Red Cross tents serve as shelter for Nicaraguans who fled home villages because of leftist Sandinista militiamen.

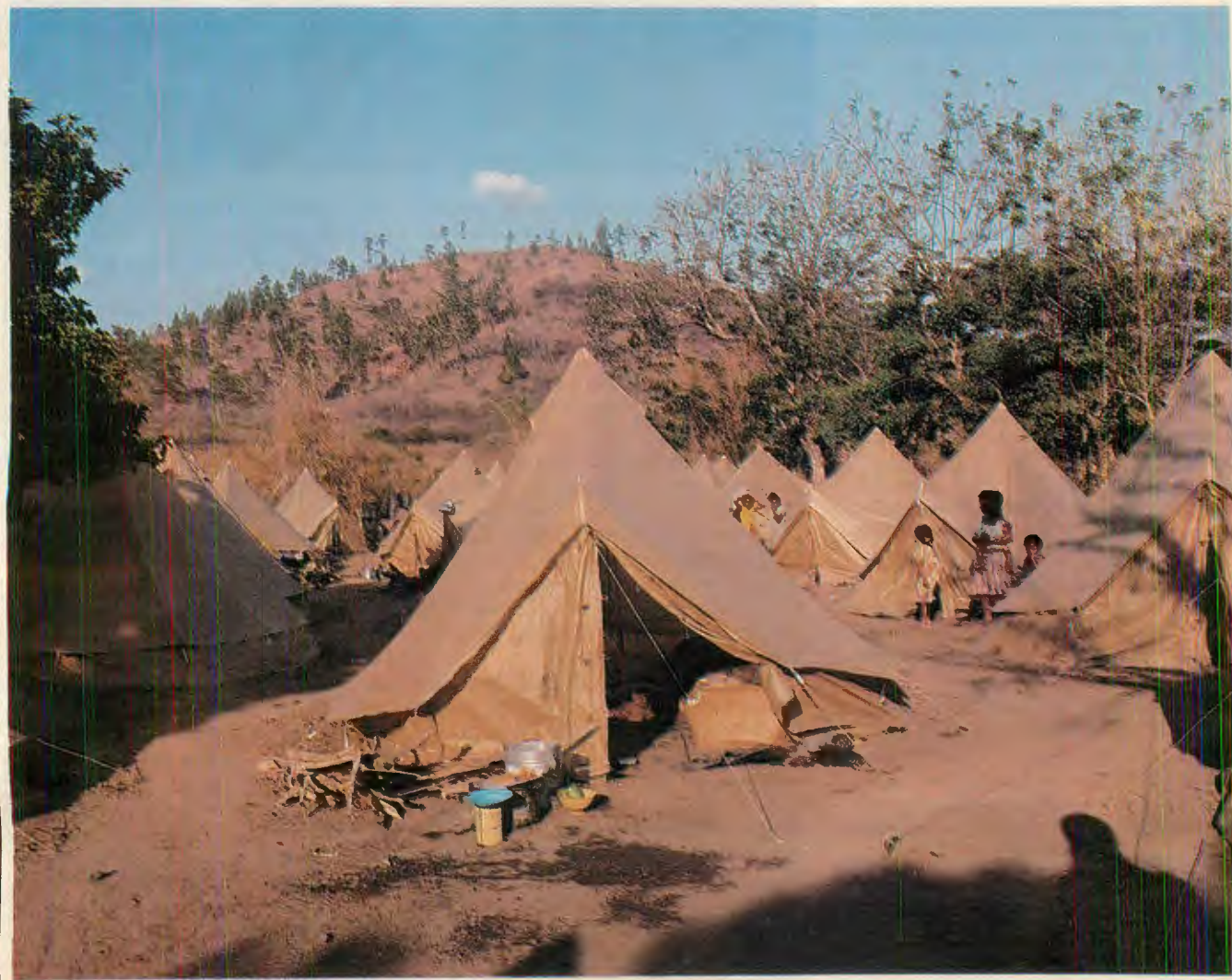
with a thin meat stew.

Tamayo grinned at the SOF reporter: "You're now an honorary *Ladino*. I've never seen a gringo put away so much rice and beans." It was delicious.

During a visit to the 12-bed infirmary, Dr. Joost Bierens of the Netherlands, one of the DWB physicians, said most ailments he treated were sanitation-oriented, mainly diarrhea, but also included some cases of TB, measles and whooping cough. He said he hadn't treated any gunshot wounds as yet, but wouldn't be surprised to see some when more refugees arrived. Refugees said most of the wounded had been left behind, tended by friends or relatives, because they were unable to carry them or were afraid they would succumb from movement.

As we left Mocoron after a long, hot day for a return to Tegucigalpa (250 miles away), the thought occurred that this refugee camp was unlike many others seen in Africa and Southeast Asia in one key respect: These people have hope for the future.

Oh yes, we never did learn who cleared the airstrip at Rus Rus. Honduran soldiers in Mocoron refused to let us proceed on to Rus Rus and a Honduran Army Huey carrying a colonel who is the area's regional military commander passed low overhead several times. ✕



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PAX CUBANA

Continued from page 47

vincible." Whether this is true will depend on the Central Americans — and the determination of the United States to help them.

PROBLEMS IN PANAMA

by Donna DuVall

The Panama Canal is operating splendidly under joint Panama-United States administration. In fact, revenue is up, and more ships than ever transit through the canal daily. The dark lining of the silver cloud, however, may be the crumbling political stability of the Panamanian government, according to a recent copyrighted *U.S. News & World Report* story.

Panama's fragile political climate, which many believe to be worsened by Cuban-supplied terrorism, threatens both the security of the canal and a newly operational American oil pipeline across western Panama that transports Alaskan oil to the eastern United States.

Until recently, Panama's future was promising. The canal was operating much better than anyone had predicted in 1978 when Panama assumed joint control. The country of two million appeared headed toward a functioning democracy. Chances of avoiding the economic hard times and ensuing political turbulence that have rocked Central America seemed good as long as Brig. Gen. Omar Torrijos, the strongman who seized power in a 1968 military coup, was at the helm. His untimely death in a 1981 plane crash, coupled with an increasingly unhealthy economy, were factors leading to the current tense conditions.

Panama's unemployment rate now exceeds 20 percent and inflation has driven prices of necessities, particularly food and electricity, to an all-time high. With these, a concomitant rise in the number of communists and leftists has occurred. The official membership in the People's Party, the Panamanian communist political party, exceeds 30,000. But many experts believe that the number of sympathizers exceeds 100,000 — five percent of the total population.

There is valid reason to fear that Cuba will take advantage of the internal support to foment more political strife in Panama — if it hasn't already. Fidel Castro has warned that he would use violence if Panama continued to support U.S. efforts to stabilize El Salvador, a country suffering from imported Sandinistan- and Cuban-sponsored subversion.

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But any American intervention would cause widespread anti-American demonstrations in Panama and throughout Latin America, and could tilt the elections in favor of the Cuban-backed leftists.

Meanwhile, Panamanian and U.S. officials have adopted an uneasy wait-and-see attitude. This next year is certain to be a long and eventful one for Panama and the canal, and subsequently for the United States. ☒

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EL SALVADOR

Continued from page 63

work, needed some supervision and the tools to do the job. As we attempted to pack some of the old T-10s, it became obvious that many of the necessary tools were missing. One young rigger complained, "We order the equipment and then we wait and wait. Nothing comes, so we make it ourselves. But it keeps breaking. We don't know what to do, so we wait."

Over half of the parachutes available for combat use were out of service because of a shortage of repair materials or repairers.

As the loft inspection continued, I observed that such elementary items as packing paddles and stowing hooks were missing. Ripstop tape used for patching small tears and holes was out of stock, as were essential items such as rubber bands for reserve containers and sewing needles for detailed handwork.

The riggers had no manuals for repairing or packing of parachutes in their loft and were unfamiliar with the necessary record-keeping for determining the repack cycles on reserve parachutes.

Near the door of the packing area sat nearly 200 new T-10 reserves still in the boxes from Pioneer Parachute Company. The reserves were to be packed for use with main parachutes that were nonexistent or unserviceable.

It is a classic case of plenty of carts, but not enough horses to pull them.

SNIPER SCHOOL

by John Doe

When SOF arrived in El Salvador, the Atlacatl Battalion had no sniper platoon. Ten days later, when we left, they had the makings of a very fine sniper platoon.

The Atlacatl's objective is to have 71 trained snipers distributed throughout the nine line companies. To help them achieve this objective, I conducted a sniper school for 44 men selected from the nine companies.

The first phase of instruction consisted of one day of dry firing and marksmanship training with the M16 and two and one-half days of live firing, expending 22 rounds per man at 25 meters. The 12 best marksmen were then issued M1D rifles (the sniper version of the M1 Garand). This is the World War II sniping rifle in .30-06, too long and heavy for Salvadoran troops, but accurate with match ammunition. Lake City Arsenal 1967 .30-06 match ammunition (173 grains at 2640 fps) was used for the training and also will be the standard sniping round.

The second phase, also two and one-half days, combined classroom instruction, dry firing and live firing of 25 rounds per man. Instruction did not include tactics or stalking, since these men will not be employed on sniper teams, but rather on 15-man patrols. Unfortunately, I had to leave after the

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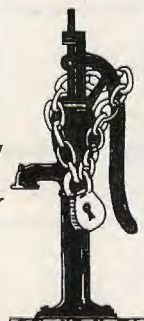
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second phase, but phase three, another week of training, was conducted by the battalion.

The results from the instruction were far beyond expectations. The Atlacatl Battalion has excellent officers and troops who are highly motivated and learn quickly. Of all the Latin American troops that I have helped train, these Salvadorans seem to have more natural shooting ability than any other group.

One Mil Group adviser told us that one Salvadoran OCS class while training at Ft. Benning fired the highest shooting score of any class which has trained there, and another Salvadoran company that trained with Special Forces in Panama outshot the 193rd Brigade Company champions.

With continued training and practice, the Atlacatl Battalion should have an effective sniping platoon. I made the following suggestions for improvement:

- The M16 rifle is in 5.56mm, the M60 machine gun is in 7.62mm NATO and the M1D is in .30-06. Conversion of sniping weapons to another caliber would simplify ammunition logistics. A possible solution is the M16 rifle with Colt Tubescope or similar device.

- Supplies needed: cleaning rods, bore brushes and other cleaning materials; web equipment, especially packs and pouches for 30-round M16 magazines; special tools for telescope on the M1D and other armorers' tools; leather Springfield M1903-type slings for sniping rifles; binoculars and



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other sighting and observation equipment, which is probably the most urgent requirement. Binoculars should be issued one each to company commanders, platoon leaders, snipers and mortar forward observers. They should be small, handy seven- or eight-power binoculars; military reticule is not absolutely necessary.

MEDICAL REPORT

by John Peters, M.D.

El Salvador's military medical situation is grim, but civilian medical conditions in outlying areas are even worse. Three large areas have no trained medical personnel of any kind and the entire medical effort is woefully lacking in every critical area: training, personnel, equipment, supplies, even hospitals.

Apparently, there is usually one medical corpsman per company, but most of these are not well-trained. Most have had only first-aid courses and are not trained in intravenous (IV) fluid replacement and had never heard of Military Anti-Shock Trousers (MAST). The ones with whom I talked did not know how to seal a sucking chest wound, which is a critical skill to know in combat medicine. They had never even heard of inserting a chest tube in the field (McSwain dart with Heimlich valve); primarily, corpsmen just put dressings on chest wounds and try to get the wounded to the hospital in San Salvador. Most don't make it.

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Although almost every point in the country is less than one hour's flying time from San Salvador's military hospital, it is usually hours, sometimes days, before they can get their wounded in. There are no field hospitals and no dedicated medevac aircraft. Even if a helicopter is available, which isn't always the case, a pilot may not be. Since there are no medical-air- evacuation specialists or even medics aboard the medevac aircraft, the wounded are loaded aboard the helicopter and flown unattended to the hospital. Sadly, soldiers often bleed to death on the way.

All of the people whom I contacted — doctors, corpsmen, officers and soldiers — were open, friendly and eager to learn about new medical equipment and techniques. They would like to have the United States (or anyone) teach them how to provide better medical care. One thing that particularly impressed me was the unanimous desire to extend medical care to civilians in the back country. They seemed well aware of the need, both from a humanitarian and a political point of view, to care for the people who at present receive no medical care at all.

Recommendations:

- Improve training and increase number of medical corpsmen; teach both doctors and corpsmen about MAST Trousers, IV techniques, chest tubes, triage and other basic medical skills; train air- evacuation medical technicians.
- Provide evacuation helicopters with air-

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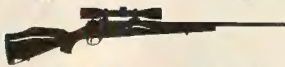
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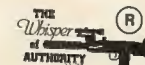
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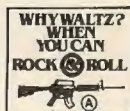
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- Encourage private organizations to help provide care and training teams, medical supplies and volunteers for such jobs as flying medevac helicopters.

- Disseminate information about the critical medical shortages to proper U.S. authorities and the public, and to the proper authorities in El Salvador.

SOF will continue to provide whatever assistance it can to the Salvadorans, but our help will not solve this large and growing problem.

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DEMOLITIONS

by John Donovan

My task in El Salvador was to teach a basic explosives course for 46 sappers of the Atlacatl Battalion. In this battalion, the sappers belong to line companies and there is no centralized engineer supervision, engineer officer or NCO.

In addition to basic demolitions, the instruction also covered booby traps and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), placement, camouflage, perimeter defense and kill zones for improvised claymores.

While instructing the sappers and working with the personnel in charge of the battalion's demolitions storage facility, I made the following observations:

- The Atlacatl Battalion has on hand about 10 kilos of Class A explosives (TNT, dynamite, plastique, etc.); 240 pounds of 8 x 7/8 60-percent stick dynamite so old that less than 50 percent will detonate at high order; 100 pounds of flake TNT in two 50-pound paper bags; some antiquated, stiff, dried-out, hard-to-work C4; 750 blasting caps of which about 75 percent are usable and should detonate (but approximately 25 percent will not due to age and deterioration of lead wires).

- The battalion has no Det Cord, fuse lighters, claymore mines or qualified engineer instructor.

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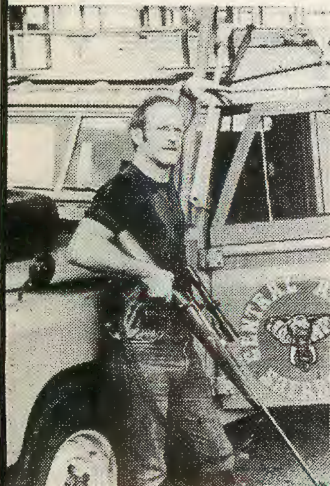
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- There are no blasting machines or crimpers in the Salvadoran Army.

- They urgently need an adequate supply of C4, preferably new and workable, which cannot be acquired from private sources there.

- Storage of explosives was totally unsatisfactory. Demolition supplies were kept in an inhabited barracks, between two sleeping rooms. Detonators and explosives were in the same containers. The storage area was open 24 hours a day with minimum supervision and smoking permitted in the area.

Before leaving, I prepared a demolition storage SOP detailing the separation of detonators and explosives, storage of detonators in a closed wooden box, storage of all demo material in an uninhabited building (preferably a bunker) with fire-fighting equipment, posting of an up-to-date inventory on the inside door and the limiting of access to the demo material to designated officers-in-charge (OIC) and key NCOs.

Based on the observations of the entire SOF team, we offer the following recommendations:

Improvement of Mil Group:

- Remove the 55-man limit. If this cannot be done because of Congressional constraints, consider employment on a contract or direct-hire basis of qualified former military personnel as civilian technicians, especially as medical, weapons and small-unit tactics instructors with the field units.

- The Mil Group should consist of highly qualified, volunteer, bilingual zealots on two-year PCS tours with jump pay and good per diem. It should be supplemented by sufficient civilian help so the Mil Group advisers spend only minimal amounts of time on administrative paperwork and maximum time working with and for the Salvadoran forces.

- Allow Mil Group personnel to go to the field with the troops. They can't evaluate what they can't see. The risk of sustaining additional U.S. casualties must be taken.

Upgrading Weapons & Tactical Instruction:

- Given the poor state of weapons, tactical training and maintenance, correcting these problems and increasing the fighting efficiency of existing units should take priority over creation of new, half-trained units. It is better to have 10 operational machine guns, with fully trained gunners and adequate cleaning materials, than 15 or more that may or may not fire due to untrained gunners and inadequate maintenance.

- Crews should be assigned permanently to specific machine guns and other heavy weapons, and thoroughly trained in their care and tactical employment. This is an area in which Mil Group instructors and/or civilian technicians can make a valuable contribution.

- Likewise, the use of Mil Group advisers or contract technicians in the field with

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battalion or even company-sized units seems to be the quickest short-term cure for the various deficiencies in tactics and field procedures.

Army NCO Academy:

Most of the weapons and tactical deficiencies are the sort that NCOs exist to prevent or correct. One result of the Salvadoran Army's rapid, recent expansion is a critical shortage of competent NCOs. Therefore, we recommend the following:

- Establishment and operation of a school — in El Salvador or elsewhere — to train selected soldiers in leadership, weapons, tactics, methods of instruction and other appropriate subjects to prepare them to serve as unit NCOs.
- Establishment of lucrative career benefits to attract competent men to serve as NCOs in the Salvadoran armed forces.
- Encourage Salvadoran officers and leaders to respect and make effective use of their NCOs.

Anti-Guerrilla Operations:

An effective Civic Action program; collection, dissemination and rapid, effective exploitation of tactical intelligence; psychological warfare (to include a local equivalent of the Chieu Hoi program); and the use of air-transported strike forces to act without delay against located enemy units or base camps are the core of effective anti-guerrilla operations, and should receive more emphasis. ☒

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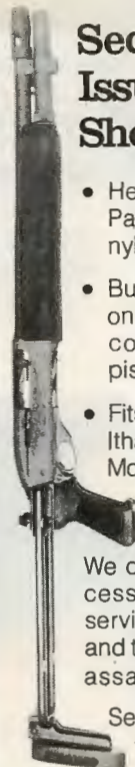
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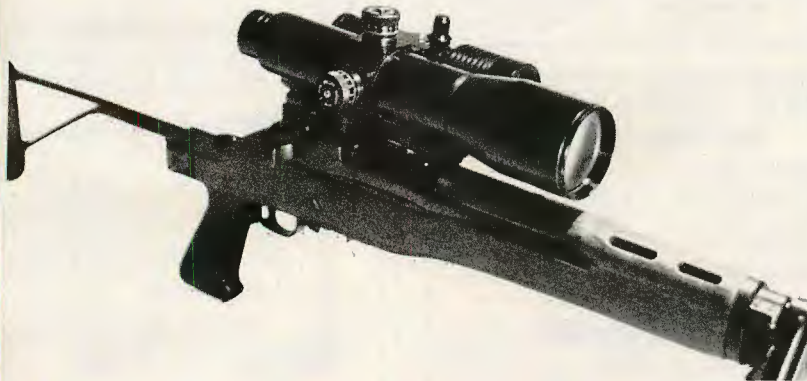
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FLAK



Continued from page 21

I not believe the amount of investigative reporting that went into this, but I also could not believe that an experienced, highly trained soldier (Bo Gritz) could be so duped by his own speeches and lies, as to think he could actually accomplish such a mission using his grade-school mission plan. Thanks for answering so many unanswered questions — although many still remain.

Fred Tompkins
Manchester, Connecticut

At any given time SOF has a number of investigative projects under way. Although there have been some that have required quite a bit of work, none has taken as much time as the POW/MIA issue, and that is as it should be. One should keep in mind that the eight SOF editors who have worked on the issue since 1981 are all Vietnam veterans (one Marine, a Korean-era former Marine who was a combat correspondent in Vietnam, one Army Airborne, four Special Forces trail-watcher) and that all eight of us did our time in the bush, some as riflemen, some as officers commanding combat units. But the real motivating factor in our on-going POW/MIA project is that some of those POW/MIAs were more than just comrades, they were friends. Here at SOF we have long held that when "Operation Lazarus" ended there would be more than a few questions left over. It's that type of story. For more on that subject see the editor's note on page 2. — The Eds.

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L/Cpl. Jesse Coleman
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

I can still remember the times when I would have killed for something to read in Vietnam. Bob Brown had similar memories from his days in an A camp so he agreed with the idea of sending the Marines in Lebanon 200 copies of SOF every month. We encourage our readers and advertisers to join in. If you have something our Marines could use over there contact Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, Washington, D.C. and they can give you the mailing information.
— Jim Graves

HASTINGS BUDDY BUDDY...

Sirs:

In reference to your article on Operation Hastings in your July '83 issue, you couldn't have picked a better picture than the one which appears on page 29. The grunt in the river carrying an M60 is Cpl. Buddy Lee James, 1st squad leader, 1st platoon, I Co 3/4. I was 2nd squad leader and we were together for a year. Buddy received a Silver Star and a Purple Heart during the operation. They flew him and most of the platoon to a hospital ship but he raised so much hell with the nurses they sent him back to be court-martialed. The 1st sergeant, however, tore the order up. He was former recon and a former primary marksman instructor. When he rotated back, he went to drill instructors school at Parris Island. But they didn't appreciate him either.

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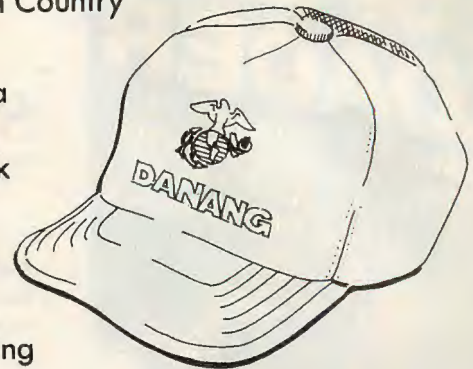
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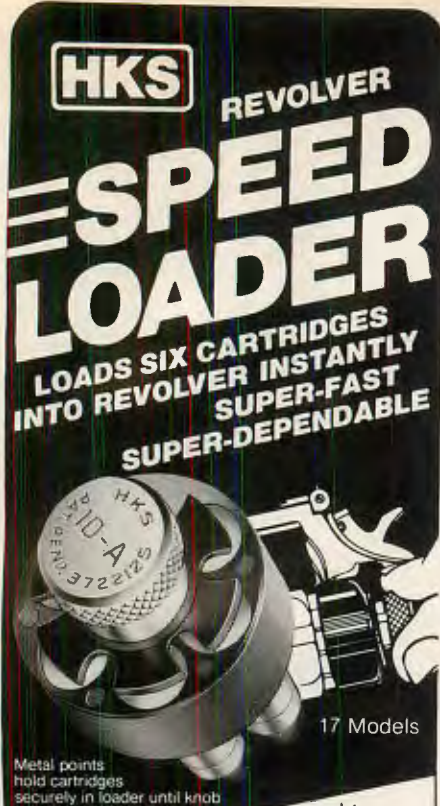
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Last time I saw him was at Camp Lejeune, in '67 when he was in 2/2 and I was in 3/2. As for his carrying an M60, we always tried to have as much firepower as the squad leader could direct.

Keep up the stories — it's good to hear what we were supposed to be doing.
 Mark Cunningham
 Trenton, Michigan

SF MEMORIES AND SPECIAL THOUGHTS...
 Sirs:

Thanks for the article in your June issue, entitled "Charlie's Luck at Dak To." I was assigned to Ben Hit Special Forces camp in 1971. Ben Hit replaced Dak To as an SF "A" camp. A244 moved west to Ben Idet and I was present when A244 closed out and the "Yard" strike force became the 95th Viet Ranger Battalion. It will interest Mr. Rose to know that Co Sav was still cooking biscuits for us in 1971.

Additionally, let me thank you for a first-rate POW/MIA Special. In my opinion Col. Gritz has managed to embarrass himself as well as bring discredit upon all Special Forces troopers, past and present. He owes us all an apology.

Barry Subelsky
 Columbus, Ohio

SALVADORAN GIVES THANKS...
 Sirs:

I was born and raised in El Salvador, but because of the war I was forced to leave my country six months ago and finish my high school education here in the States.

Since I read your first report of the war in Central America (see "The War in El Salvador," SOF, November '81), I have been wishing to congratulate your courageous staff for such excellent stories.

I have just finished reading "The War on Our Doorstep" and "Their Fight is Our Fight" (July '83), and I must say that I am deeply touched. You can be sure I speak

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UP TO SNUFF...

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While reading "Say Goodbye, Comrade Jaws," in your April '83 issue, we discovered that you dip Skoal. It's heart-warming to know that a fellow communist hater is also a Skoal brother.

We are stationed in Germany, in a mechanized infantry unit, and agree that your magazine is better than our soldiers manual. Our hearts are especially soft on your support to the Vietnam War and vets, and the Afghan Freedom Fighters.

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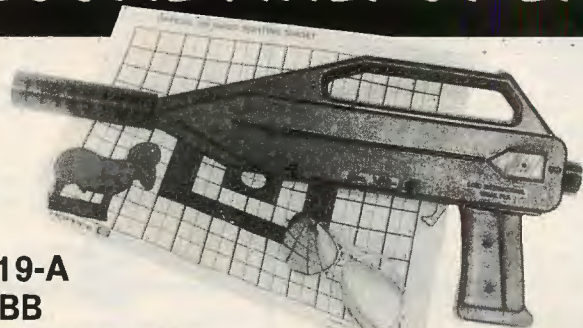


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Besides the fact that he likes it, Robert K. Brown has found that Skoal makes a great impression on the yahoos at things like State Department dinners. He says they tend to lose their cool when, while being verbally assaulted for their sins, he puts the nearest glass to a use for which they didn't intend it. But he is hell on coffee cups around the office. — Jim Graves

WAR BY ANY NAME...

Sirs: I've had the same argument concerning the Vietnam War with several friends and cannot find any authority to resolve the question. I turn to your publication for enlightenment.

The Vietnam War is generally portrayed as a civil war between the Viet Cong (i.e., the local or South Vietnamese guerrilla fighters) and the United States-backed Saigon regime.

The image of the black-pajama-clad peasant guerrilla is so strong that most people seem to feel that it was he whom the United States fought for most of the war and who finally brought down the Saigon regime.

I believe that the Vietnam War was not an internal South Vietnamese civil war, but a conflict between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. I vaguely remember that the Viet Cong never numbered many more than 90,000 troops in 1968 and were wiped out by 1968. For the most part, the United States fought North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars, who were sent south. Likewise, the fall of the Saigon government was not the result of a Viet Cong uprising but of a full-fledged military invasion from the North that took several weeks to push south to Saigon.

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The question is: Was Vietnam a local civil war or essentially a national conflict between North and South Vietnam?

Andrew Allen
Belvedere, California

That one has been at the heart of various Vietnam theories since back in the 1960s. You are correct in that the Viet Cong was destroyed, deliberately, by the North Vietnamese, according to some sources, after 1968 and, yes, Vietnam fell when the United States Congress pulled out, refusing to give further support, and the country was invaded by North Vietnamese regulars. — Jim Graves

REFIGHTING 1948 WAR...

Sirs:
Leroy Thompson is one of my favorite gun writers, and I have always looked forward to his informative, interesting and knowledgeable articles. I am, however, deeply disturbed by your May '83 article on Glubb Pasha, the "British Bedouin." The article contains many distortions of history and outright factual errors concerning the Legion's 1946-48 role against Israel that must be corrected. Knowing that you would not willingly mislead your readers, I am sure that you will correct what is obviously an attempt to rewrite history.

Several points among many:

1) Jordan is Palestine. It is 77 percent of the land area of British mandatory Palestine and was artificially carved out of British mandatory Palestine in 1922 by the arbitrary and unilateral decree of Winston Churchill and the British Foreign Office to create a country as a consolation prize for the Hashemite Emir Abdullah, a WWI "ally" of the British. (Trans) Jordan did not become a sovereign nation until March 1946 — and even then only by reason of a special treaty with the British.

2) Page 30 — "Terrorists infiltrating (Transjordan?) from Palestine" — who were these terrorists? Jews? Arabs? What would anyone want with Transjordan at that time? The Palestinian Jews and the Arabs were both far too busy fighting and killing each other to even notice or care about Eastern Palestine (now called Jordan) let alone to be concerned about infiltrating it.

3) Page 31 — "Fearing that the more numerous, better-armed Israelis would overrun the Arab portions of Palestine, King Abdullah ordered Glubb to occupy them defensively...."

Wrong! The Legion was ordered in to smash the infant Jewish state and to prevent Egypt's Farouk from grabbing all of western Palestine for himself.

As for those "more numerous, better-armed Israelis," any student of the period knows that the Israeli Army of the 1947-48 period was a ragtag, ill-equipped group of immigrants, always outnumbered and out-gunned by the Arabs, and especially by the superbly British-equipped and -off-

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iced Legion. The Israeli Army of 1947-48 was a far cry from today's IDF and had a total strength of 30,000, including local defense units of which only 15,000 could be considered front-line fighting troops.

4) The Legion was an instrument of British policy. It was far from impartial and was totally against the Jewish inhabitants of western Palestine. It was superbly equipped and officered by the British and it was by far the finest army in the Mideast in the 1947-50 period.

5) Page 72 — How can the 2,000-man Legion figure given at the top of page 72 be reconciled with the 11,000-man figure given in the fourth paragraph? A 120,000 man Israeli Army? Based on a total population of 600,000 Jews in-country?

The true figures for that period were over 10,000 combat troops in the Legion alone, against an absolute total of 15,000 Israeli fighters — without mentioning the Egyptian, Iraqi, Syrian, Saudi, Lebanese and Palestine Arab Liberation armies. These groups comprised at least 30,000 additional combat troops, together with their additional armor, artillery and aircraft.

An even more significant figure is that the 600,000 population of the infant Israeli state was attacked by the combined 30-million population resources of the Arab world, and that Israel lost 6,000 dead, fully one percent of its population, in that war. To use a popular analogy, this would be as if the United States lost 2.3 million in Vietnam — in one year!

6) Page 72 — The Legion saved the Moslem holy places in Jerusalem — from whom? The Israelis? They never held them, and anything but a total victory for the far superior Legion against the ragtag Israelis would be tantamount to a defeat.

7) Page 72 — The Israelis repeatedly attempted to assault the heavily defended hilltop fortress of Latrun from the surrounding open lowlands with raw untrained immigrants right off the boat, many of whom had never held a gun before. Remember, this was 1948, there was no Israel armor, artillery, air support or IDF as we know it today. Over 600 died from the Legion's machine guns that day under the hot sun in Latrun's fields.

8) Page 72 — "The full strength of the Israeli Army . . ." in 1948 was pitiful. It was not today's superb IDF and IAF, but a motley collection of poorly trained immigrants armed with museum pieces such as 98 Mausers, rusty Stens and Piper Cubs. That they were not totally overrun by the superb Legion and the six other armies ranged against them was truly a miracle.

The list of errors, distortions and omissions goes on and on, and I cannot help but think that the author's views may have been swayed by his British education.

The information contained in this letter is based upon the following authorities, all of which I recommend to you for future reading on the subject: *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, Herzog, 1982, *O Jerusalem*, Collins and Lapierre, 1972, *Israel, the Embat-*

itled Ally, Safran, 1978, 1981, Arab-Israel Conflict Atlas, Gilbert, 1974.

Thanking you in advance for this opportunity to set the record straight.

David Mayer
Miami Beach, Florida

I would first like to thank you for stating that I am one of your favorite writers, and also for using "is" rather than "was" in that context. Whether we agree on the facts or their interpretation, I would like to compliment Mr. Mayer on a very intelligent and well-presented rebuttal. As he surmises, I am obviously pro-British and pro-Arab Legion in the article. I purposely gave the article this slant for two reasons.

First, it is an article about Glubb and the Legion and my emphasis was on them and the events as they saw them. Secondly, the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict — especially in the United States — has been written almost entirely from the Israeli slant. I have attempted to balance that. I would ask you if your reply is not written from a predisposition to defend Israel at all costs? In fact, to make things more current, I would be interested in having SOF readers serving with the U.S. Marines, the French 2nd Rep, or the Italian Bersaglieri write concerning the press portrayal of Israeli forces in Lebanon right now and whether or not this portrayal is accurate or slanted.

In reply to some of the specific points raised by Mr. Mayer: "Jordan is Palestine" is an interpretation; however, I used the term Palestine to refer to the mandated area granted independence on 14 May 1948. As far as figures are concerned, both sides tended to "cook" them to make themselves look good, but even Gunther Rothenberg in his authoritative The Anatomy of the Israeli Army gives Israel combat strength of up to 45,000 in 1947 and 80,000 in 1948. The 2,000 figure for the Legion refers to the initial commitment, while 11,000 was the figure reached after reinforcement and the commitment of reserves.

The Israeli forces may have been armed with 98 Mausers, but the Legion was armed with Lee-Enfields. Which is more effective is open to question. The Israelis may have had rusty Stens, but the Legion had Lewis guns. Once again citing Rothenberg, in 1948 the Israelis had over 1,500 medium or heavy MGs and more than 11,000 SMGs. Their firepower wasn't all that anemic. They also had most of the Legion's ammunition, which they had captured from the Egyptians. Israeli assaults on Latrun were heroic, but so was the Legion's defense.

I have read all of the works you cited, but can Chaim Herzog (an Israeli general) and Nadav Safran, for example, be considered any more unbiased than the veterans of the Arab Legion I talked with or diaries which I consulted? I agree with you that the list of "errors, distortions and omissions goes on and on." My question is: Who continues to propagate these errors?

Even Rothenberg in his preface makes the point that accounts of Israeli campaigns are often distorted. I admire the IDF immensely, but I think they should be evaluated by the same criteria as any other military force and not by the "Army of God" rose-colored glasses which seem to color any discussion of Israeli military history.

One final note re my respect for the IDF: It's not by accident that an Israeli paratrooper shares the dust jacket of my book Uniforms of the Elite Forces with the SAS and the Special Forces.

Leroy Thompson ✕



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Continued from page 17

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Almost a decade after the last helicopters lifted off with the final load of American troops leaving Saigon, the role of the American media in that war is undergoing critical examination, most noticeably by correspondents who were in Vietnam. Some attribute the Tet "defeat," or even that of Vietnam itself, to the war's messengers because of biased, anti-war coverage. (See "Word War" by Robert Elegant, SOF, December '82.)

As part of this self-examination, the University of Southern California Journalism School, Los Angeles, hosted a four-day seminar, "Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons from a War," originally conceived by and for Vietnam correspondents. When word of the seminar got around, however, the conference scope broadened to include almost every facet of America's longest war.

Dave Wyrick, who attended for SOF, lamented that an objective, dispas-

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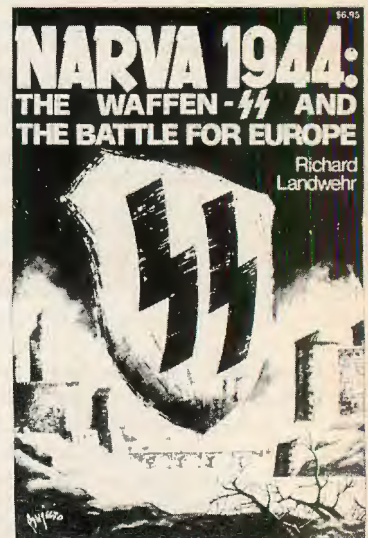
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tell. One staffer, acquainted with the military joke collection of SOF's Dave Isby, called him, and Dave came to the president's rescue with a refitted Gurkha joke.

At the party, Reagan told the joke about the Marines who attended an Army parachute school and were told that they would practice a low-level jump from 800 feet. One Marine sergeant asked if they couldn't jump from 500 feet instead. The Army jumpmaster, incredulous at the suggestion, informed him that would not be advisable since the parachutes would not have time to open from that height. "Oh," the Marine asked, "we're going to use parachutes?"

Not one Marine in the Rose Garden cracked a smile at the Commander-in-Chief's joke. "I think you've heard it before," Reagan observed wryly.

Let's hope the last laugh is not on the Marine Corps, whose members should be taught better political manners, or on Dave for supplying Ron with a stale joke. It could have nipped Dave's career as Washington's joke laureate in the bud.

ZIMBABWE ARMY ATROCITIES...

Citing what it calls "firm evidence," *Africa Now Magazine*, in its April '83 issue, accuses Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwean Army with killing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of innocent civilians in Matabeleland, stronghold of Joshua Nkomo's dissident ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) organization. (Nkomo fled Zimbabwe last spring because he feared he would be killed by Mugabe's forces and now lives in London.)

Refuting the government's claim that any civilians killed were accidentally caught in crossfire between army troops and armed rebels, *Africa Now* claims: "Many hundreds of civilian casualties were not the accidental by-product of an 'anti-dissident' campaign but were deliberate."

Africa Now says it has documented 113 killings and numerous beatings that did not involve ZAPU members. One such incident was that of two sisters, both pregnant, who were bayoneted to death by army Fifth Brigade members because they were believed to have been impregnated by "dissidents" and the soldiers "wanted people to see what dissident babies look like."

The African magazine reports that Fifth Brigade has been arriving at villages and townships with lists of local ZAPU officials and activists. They and sometimes their families are killed or detained. One source quotes a Fifth Brigade officer as saying that their job was "to break the ZAPU infrastructure

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and they were going to make sure they finished the job."

But it's not just the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade that is engaged in these civilian atrocities; *Africa Now* also accuses the police, Police Support Unit and paratroops, the latter two comprised primarily of ex-Rhodesian soldiers.

The killings have not involved just civilians, according to *Africa Now*. Some 13,000 of the National Army members are former ZAPU guerrillas and a purge of them is reportedly underway. "A series of secret military court martials has begun. Defendants are allowed no defense and conviction is followed by secret execution," the magazine reports.

Mugabe's ruling ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) party contends that it is merely trying to avert a "Zero Hour" coup by ZAPU and the majority of the deaths are those of ZAPU infrastructure members. In an attempt to stop the rumors of government atrocities, Mugabe has promised that journalists can journey to Matabeleland to see for themselves. Critics and villagers claim that the killings haven't stopped as a result, but that the soldiers now burn bodies to destroy evidence of civilian deaths, rather than leave them to rot as a lesson to others.

GURKHAS TRAIN IN U.S....

Gurkhas, the legendary, courageous Nepalese warriors who have served Great Britain for 168 years, trained for the first time in the United States last spring in Fort Lewis, Wash. The 1st Battalion, 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles, 650 men, arrived in early February '83 for six weeks training.

Other British units have trained in the States, as part of a NATO exchange program, but this is a first for the Gurkhas, who are expected to get more realistic training with live-weapons firing than is generally available in Europe.

The Gurkhas, who carry a trademark — the razor-sharp, curved *kukri* knife — came to the United States armed with a different knife — a \$20 Falklands souvenir blade; these knives and "Falkland Islands 1982" T-shirts were both for sale. ✕

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